STORY BY
HANJIRO TSUKIOKA
ART BY
HIKARU TANAKA
Scarlet
EMPIRE
3

Scarlet EMPIRE

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3

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10 ◆ A DUTY TO WHOM? — 003

CHAPTER 11 ◆ A BATTERED OATH — 035

CHAPTER 12 ◆ SHADOWS FALL ON THE CAPITAL — 075

CHAPTER 13 ◆ LOOMING DARKNESS — 099

CHAPTER 14 ◆ THE STRANGE TALE OF THE OUMIYA INCIDENT — 129

CHAPTER 15 ◆ A HERO'S RESOLVE — 167

CHAPTER 16 ◆ FORCED TO INHERIT HIS VISION — 207

CHAPTER 17 ◆ A CHANCE MEETING IN A CORRIDOR — 239

YOU...!
WHY'D YOU COME BACK HERE!?
YOU! THE GIRL FROM BEFORE!
MY NAME ISN'T "YOU"!
IT'S YOSHINO!

Chapter 10: A Duty to Whom?

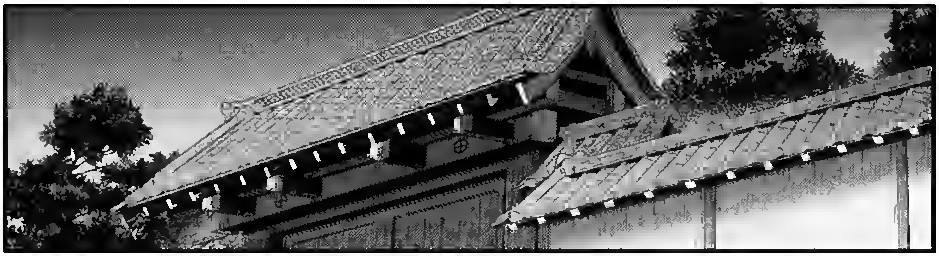
WH...
WHO ...?
WHAT ?
IS SHE A FRIEND OF YOURS!?
WHAT !?
AH!
W-WELL, NOT EXACTLY...
...!
COULD THIS BE... A LOVE TRIAN-GLE!?
I SEE...
DON'T SAY THAT LIKE YOUR BIRTH-DAY'S COME EARLY!

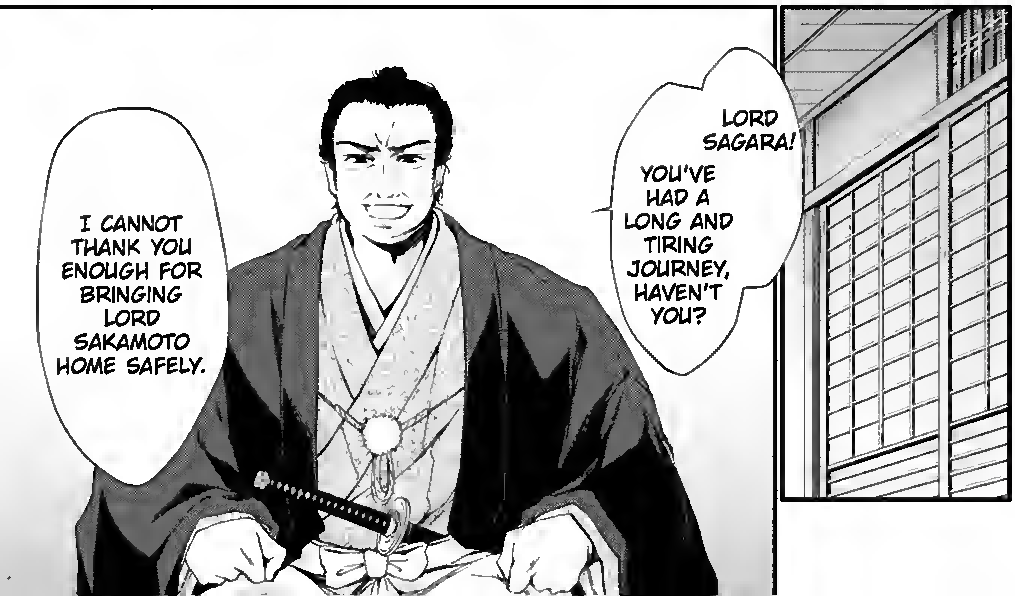
SHE WAS GETTING HASSLED BY A BUNCH OF CREEPS OUTSIDE THE GATE HERE EARLIER TODAY.
I JUMPED IN TO HELP HER, AND THEN RYOUMA SHOWED UP...
...AND HE HELPED HER ESCAPE—
HEY!
ISN'T IT DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO BE IN SHIMABARA!?
HOW COME YOU CAME BACK!?
SNARL
OH, STOP YOUR NATTERING ON!
I'VE COME TO TALK TO SAIDANI-SAN, NOT YOU!
"SAIDANI"...?
OH RIGHT, SHE MEANS ME...
I WASN'T ABLE TO THANK YOU PROPERLY AT THE TIME, SO...
...I SIMPLY HAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
BUT YOSHINO...!!
YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS TO RUNAWAY COURTESANS WHO GET CAUGHT—
EVEN SO!

WELL, WELL...!
"ORYOU" ...?
JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW SPIRITED YOU KYOTO GIRLS ARE!
PAT
PAT
I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A PLUCKY LASS, APART FROM ORYOU!
I ADMIT, I'M ASTONISHED!
YES, THAT'S TRUE ...
LORD SAIGOU IS WAITING FOR YOU, AFTER ALL.
RIGHT, SAGARA-SAN?
AND I'M AFRAID I CAN'T BRING YOU ALONG ...
...I'M DUE BACK AT THE SATSUMA MANSION.
STILL, I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT ...

LET'S BE ON OUR WAY.
YES, SIR.
SHUFFLE
MUTTER
MUTTER
!?
HUH...? YEAH, OKAY...
?
WHISPER
HE SAYS ...
POKE POKE
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
...!
WHISPER
UHH...
..."THE HOUR OF THE OX AT THE KAMO RIVER"...?
NOD

SHE GOT IT, JUST FROM THAT...?
DIDN'T GET IT.
ナニ？
DASH

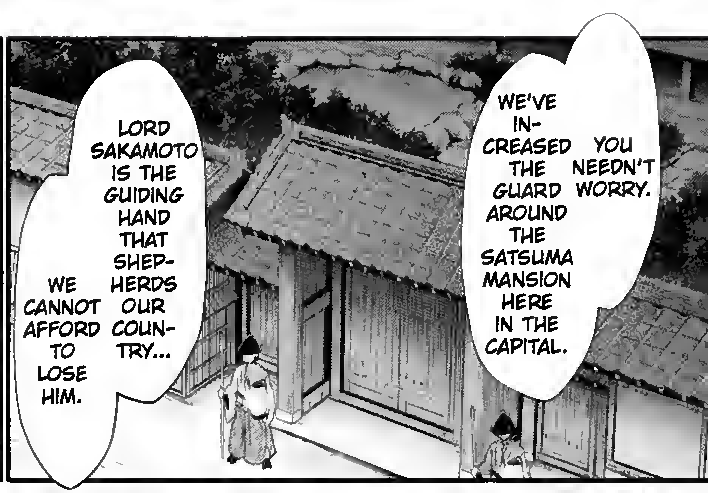



I CANNOT THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR BRINGING LORD SAKAMOTO HOME SAFELY.
LORD SAGARA! YOU'VE HAD A LONG AND TIRING JOURNEY, HAVEN'T YOU?

AHHHH! AHEM! AHEM-HEM!
YOU SEE ...!!
THE SHIN-SENGUMI ...!?
HOWEVER, WE ENCOUN-TERED THE SHIN-SENGUMI ON OUR WAY HERE...
NOT AT ALL ...
THEY TRULY RESCUED ME FROM A TIGHT SPOT!!
THAT SATSUMA ROSHI BAND OF HIS IS SO SKILLED, EVEN THE SHINSENGUMI FLEE IN TERROR BEFORE THEM!
IT WAS QUITE ALL RIGHT!!
AH HA HA HA HA !!
WOULDN'T WANT TO MAKE MORE WORK FOR THESE FELLOWS!
WELL, THEN, I WON'T BE RUN-NING OFF AGAIN!
GRAB
SORRY ABOUT THAT!!
WHOOPS! ☆
BEH!
AT ANY RATE, LORD SAKAMOTO!! YOUR INSISTENCE UPON RUNNING OFF WAS THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS!
IS... IS THAT SO...

BY THE WAY, LORD SAGARA.
I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT THE SHOGUNATE ASSASSINS PURSUING LORD SAKAMOTO THAT YOU DESCRIBED IN YOUR MESSAGE...
THAT WOULD CERTAINLY EASE OUR WORRIES ...
HAVE ANY SUCH RUMORS REACHED YOUR EARS...!?
YES...
NONE AT ALL...
HAVE MEMBERS OF SUCH A GROUP REALLY ENTERED THE CAPITAL?
IT'S HARD TO BE SURE.
BUT GIVEN THAT THE ENEMY'S LEADER IS A MAN OF CONSIDERABLE SKILL... IF THEY FAILED TO CAPTURE HIM IN EDO, I'M QUITE SURE HE'LL HAVE FOLLOWED US HERE.

NOW, NOW!
THEN HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU NOT TO RUN OFF FOR FUN?
YES, I'M WELL AWARE OF ALL THAT!!
LORD SAIGOOOU!
PEW-PEW!


WE'VE INCREASED THE GUARD AROUND THE SATSUMA MANSION HERE IN THE CAPITAL.
YOU NEEDN'T WORRY.
LORD SAKAMOTO IS THE GUIDING HAND THAT SHEPHERDS OUR COUNTRY...
WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE HIM.

I FEEL JUST THE SAME.

UNTIL I SEE DAWN BREAK OVER THIS COUNTRY ...
...I—NO, NOT JUST ME. ALL OF US ARE GOING TO LIVE...
...TO SEE A NEW SUN RISE IN JAPAN!

AS DO I.

GAH-HA-HA-HA-HA!
I'M TRULY GLAD TO HEAR IT!
THE THREE OF US WILL BRING ABOUT THE DAWN OF AN ERA...
...AND MAKE WAY FOR A WORLD WITHOUT WAR!!

FREEZE
TO THAT END, LORD SAGARA ...
...I MUST ASK YOU TO WATCH OVER LORD SAKAMOTO UNTIL THAT DAWN BREAKS UPON OUR NATION.
!!?
OUR ROSHI BAND ...
...WILL DEVOTE ALL HANDS TO THE MISSION OF GUARDING HIM.
GUNT
N-N-NOW HANG ON!

I SAID I'M QUITE ALL RIGHT! NO NEED FOR A GUARD...!!
WAIT A MINUTE!
AND WITH THAT, I'M OFF...
PARDON ME...
REST WELL, LORD SAGARA!
INDEED

OOKI.
GOOD JOB TODAY.
... HEY.
ARE YOU IGNORING ME...?
DON'T SPEAK TO ME.
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
THEY SAID IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE GUARD ON RYOUMA.
CLANK
UWAH !?
YANK
SLAM
POP
にゃ
WHA ...?
ARE YOU STILL MAD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER? HEY, OOKI—
GRAB

KOTE-TSU!
I'M GOING OUT TO SEE YOSHINO IN A MINUTE!
SHH!
KEEP IT DOWN!
RYOUMA !?

KEEP IT DOWN, WILL YOU!?
SHHHH!
YOU'RE GONNA RUN OFF AGA—
HUH !!?
WORK...
JAB
JAB
OW!

URGH...
HOWLING ALL THE WAY!
IT'S FINE! I'M GOING, EVEN IF I HAVE TO SHAKE YOU OFF FIRST!
AH-HA-HA-HA-HA...
ANYWAY, YOU CAN'T GO! THEY'LL GET MAD AT ME!
WHAT? NO WAY!
YOU KNOW, AS A GUARD FOR ME! WELL!?
YOU SHOULD COME TOO!!
NOW, NOW!
YOU GET MY POINT, SO LET'S GET READY!
DAMMIT...!
I WON'T FORGET THIS...
YOU SNEAK ...!!
HOW THE HELL ARE YOU A HERO OF JAPAN !?
SHOCK
COME ON!
IF WE MAKE IT OUT AND BACK AGAIN WITHOUT BEING CAUGHT, THEN WHERE'S THE HARM!!?
SMIRK
IF THEY FOUND OUT I RAN OFF WHILE YOU WERE MEANT TO BE GUARDING ME, IT WOULD BE YOUR FAULT EITHER WAY, RIGHT?
FSHHH
WERE YOU FIGHTING WITH THAT OTHER GUARD JUST NOW?

NOT REALLY. I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
FLUMP
ポスッ
HUH?
THAT OOKI FELLOW.
FLUMP
ポスッ
I JUST WANT FOR US TO GET ALONG, BUT...
... OOKI IS...
I'M HUNGRY...

.....
THREE HUNDRED EIGHTY SEVEN...
THREE HUNDRED EIGHTY SIX...
LET'S SEE... MY SPARE SANDALS, AND...
OOH, WHAT IS IT? C..N WE GET A SNACK!?
LOOK HERE, SOUJI.

I KNEW IT! WE'VE GOTTA TRY THE TOFU IN KYOTO!
FOR TOFU, THIS BOOK SAYS...

I...
...DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN DO TO BE OF HELP TO THEM...

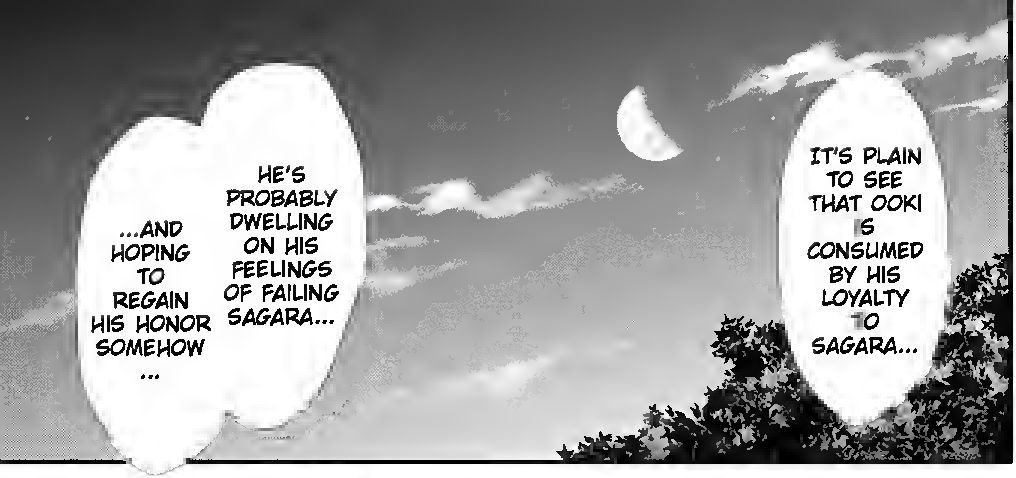
HUH?
UH...YEAH, I GUESS SO...
JUMP
HEYYY!
KOTE-CHAN, YOU WANNA TRY ALL THE CAPITAL CUISINE TOO, RIGHT!?
HEY!!!

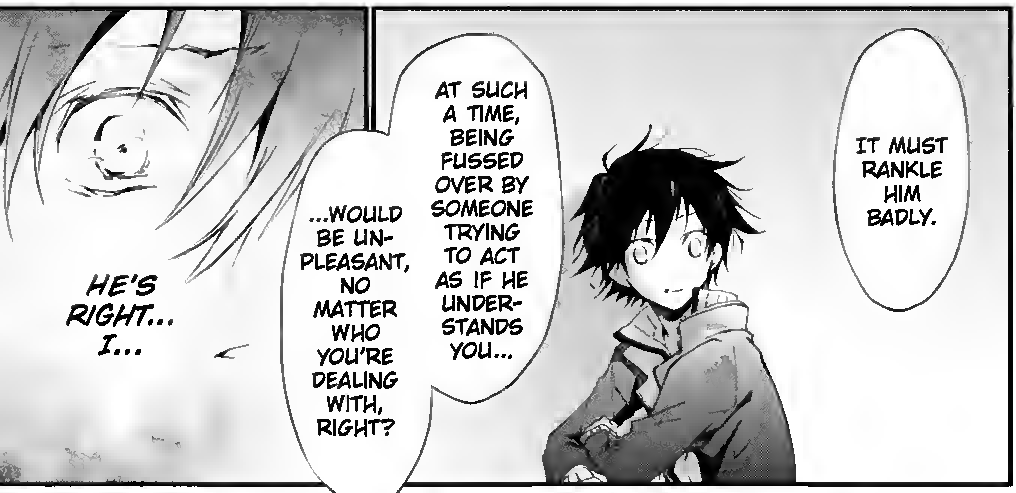
...AT LEAST...
...TRY TO KEEP YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT!
AH... RIGHT...
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT. SORRY, SORRY!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
SHUT
I GUESS WE WERE BEING A LITTLE LAX...
...NOW THAT LORD SAKAMOTO'S SAFE...
WH-WHAT'S WITH YOU, OOKI?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
KOTE-CHAN!
BETTER TREAD LIGHTLY ...
.....

STOMP
I KNOW A LOT'S HAPPENED, BUT...
...WE BROUGHT RYOUMA BACK SAFELY, SO THERE WAS NOTHING TO WORRY AB—
"A LOT"...
...HAP-PENED, HUH...?
THIS IS...
...EXACTLY WHAT I'VE BEEN SAYING I CAN'T STAND ABOUT YOU...!

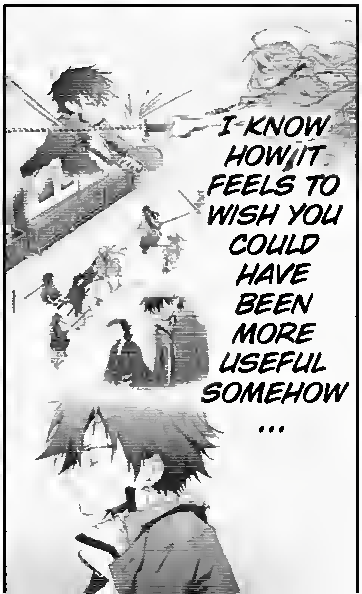
OOKI—
SLAP
WHAT THE HELL...
...IS HIS PROBLEM WITH ME ANYWAY ...?
ARE YOU AN IDIOT?

HUH...?
HAVE YOU EVEN TRIED IMAGINING HOW OOKI FEELS?
HOW OOKI FEELS...?
THAT'S RIGHT!
ALL YOUR WORRIES ABOUT OOKI CONCERN ONLY HOW YOU FEEL.
HE CAME ALL THE WAY TO KYOTO TO GUARD ME...
...ONLY TO BE CHIDED BY ME AND TO NARROWLY ESCAPE DEATH.
BY ALL RIGHTS, YOUR ROSHI BAND SHOULD FEEL OVERCOME BY FAILURE.


IT'S PLAIN TO SEE THAT OOKI IS CONSUMED BY HIS LOYALTY TO SAGARA...
HE'S PROBABLY DWELLING ON HIS FEELINGS OF FAILING SAGARA...
...AND HOPING TO REGAIN HIS HONOR SOMEHOW ...

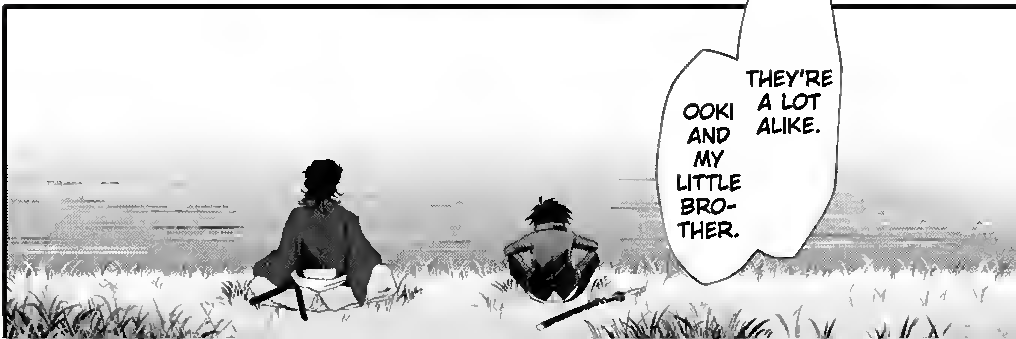

IT MUST RANKLE HIM BADLY.
AT SUCH A TIME, BEING FUSSED OVER BY SOMEONE TRYING TO ACT AS IF HE UNDERSTANDS YOU...
...WOULD BE UNPLEASANT, NO MATTER WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH, RIGHT?
HE'S RIGHT... I...

SO ALL THIS TIME ...
...TO OOKI, I'VE JUST BEEN...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT "ALL THIS TIME"... BUT...


I KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO WISH YOU COULD HAVE BEEN MORE USEFUL SOMEHOW ...

...IS IT REALLY ...
...YOUR "DUTY" TO SAVE HIM?

"...AS LONG AS YOU'RE AROUND!"
"NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE FOR ME...
"WHAT MAKES YOU SUCH A HERO?

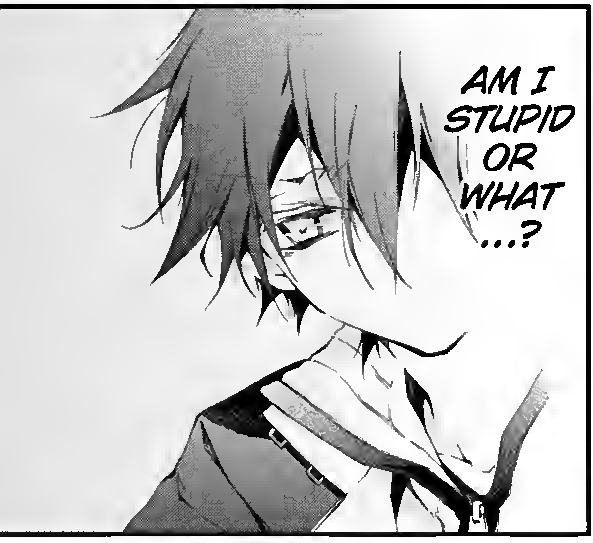

THEY'RE A LOT ALIKE.
OOKI AND MY LITTLE BRO-THER.

MY BROTHER AND I HAD A FIGHT, AND I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE.
I WONDER HOW HE'S DOING NOW...I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I'LL EVER SEE HIM AGAIN...
THAT'S WHY I...!!
CLENCH
...KOTETSU.
NO MATTER HOW ALIKE THEY ARE, OOKI ISN'T YOUR BROTHER.
PERHAPS THAT FOND DEVOTION OF YOURS...
...IS BEING DIRECTED TOWARD THE WRONG PERSON, EH?

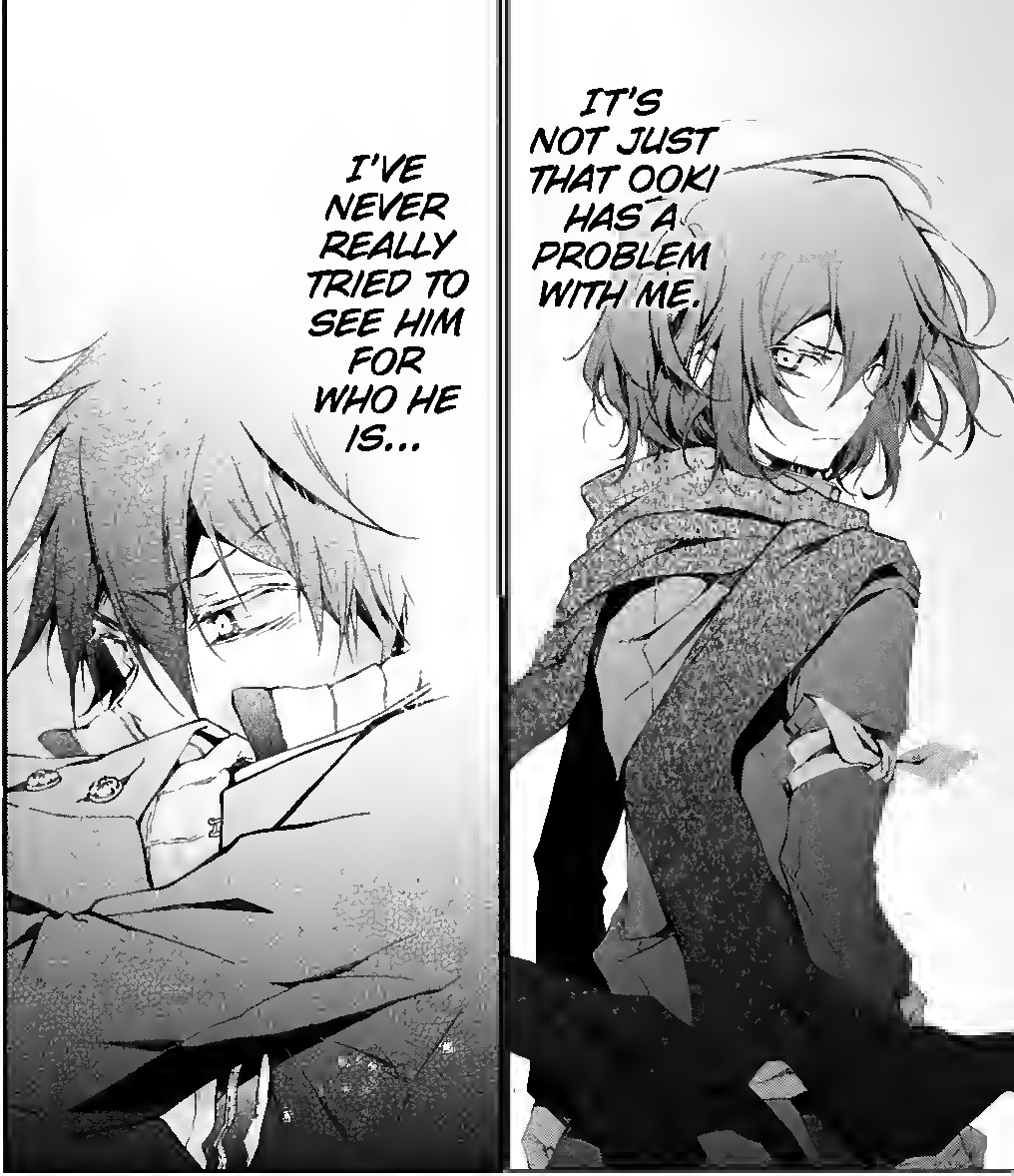
RIGHT, YOSHINO!?
GUITE!
GUITE!
WHOA!
WHEN DID YOU GET HERE!?
YOU STARTLED ME!
CRASH
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST US - TWO...
HEY, YOU NEVER SAID...
HOW OLD IS THIS OOKI-KUN?
.....
UM...
HOW OLD IS HE...?
HAAH...
YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS!!
ACTING BIG BROTHERLY BECAUSE HE RESEMBLES YOUR LITTLE BROTHER WITHOUT HAVING SO MUCH AS AN INKLING OF HIS AGE?
THAT'S GOING RATHER TOO FAR!!
URK...

HEY, YOU CAN'T JUST—
SEE?
YOU GET WORKED UP TOO QUICKLY AND START BABBLING!!
IT'S AWFULLY CHILDISH.
...!!
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO GOT SO "WORKED UP" THAT YOU JUST HAAAD TO COME AND SAY "THANK YOU"!
WHO'S THE CHILDISH ONE HERE, HUH?
SNARL
I'M NOT A CHILD! I'M SIXTEEN! I'M QUITE GROWN UP!
SNARL
WHA ...?
THAT DIDN'T DO ANY HARM! IT DIDN'T INCONVENIENCE ANYONE ELSE, DID IT!?
NOW, NOW, YOU TWO!!
SIX-TEEN...!?
I THOUGHT SHE WAS YOUNGER! ...!!


AM I STUPID OR WHAT ...?

SERI-OUSLY...
HMPH!

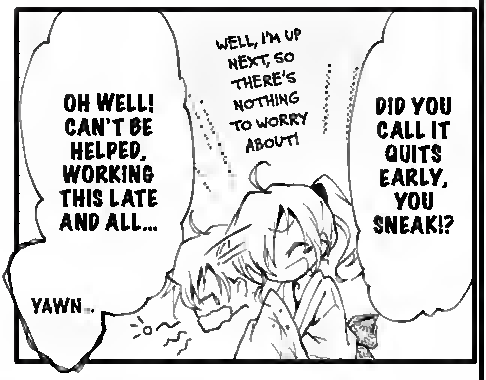

I'VE NEVER REALLY TRIED TO SEE HIM FOR WHO HE IS...
IT'S NOT JUST THAT OOKI HAS A PROBLEM WITH ME.

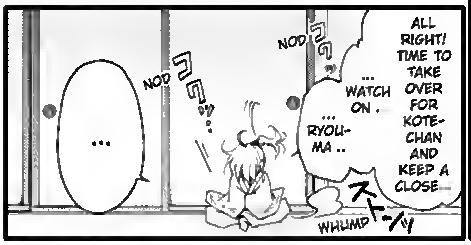
IF THE SATSUMA GO TO WAR WITH THE SHOGUNATE, WE'RE SURE TO WIN!!
SLAM
LORD SAGARA HAS ALREADY SAID THAT GOING TO WAR WOULD BE POOR REPAYMENT FOR SAKAMOTO'S EFFORTS.
...YES, BUT OOKUBO ...
WHAT'S MORE, I'VE HEARD SAKAMOTO HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE SHOGUNATE OF LATE!
BUT SAKA-MOTO'S IMPERIAL RESTO-RATION...
...HELPS NO ONE SO MUCH AS...
...THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE THEM-SELVES!!
... LISTEN, SAIGOU ...

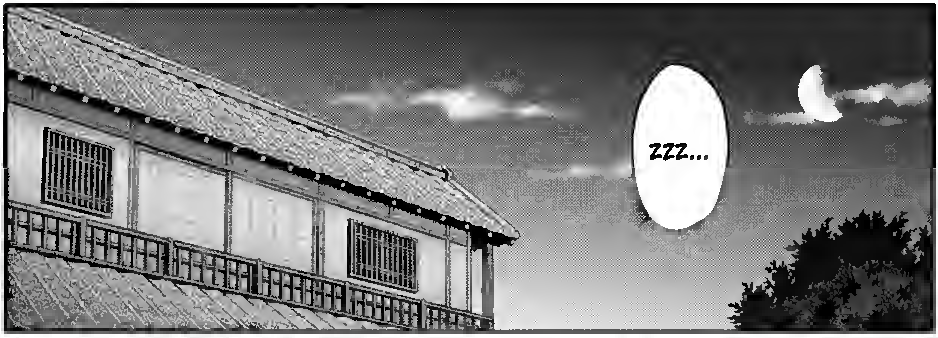
SAKAMOTO-SAN IS NOT THAT SORT OF MAN...I CAN VOUCH FOR THAT.
...STILL, I AGREE...
SURELY HE MUST BE MAKING NICE WITH THE CHOUSHU CLAN AND THE SHOGUNATE AND PLOTTING AGAINST THE SATSUMA CLAN!
HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED WHY SAKAMOTO KEEPS RUNNING OFF?
...HE HAS BECOME A THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE SATSUMA...
...SAD AS I AM TO SAY IT...

Scarlet
EMPIRE

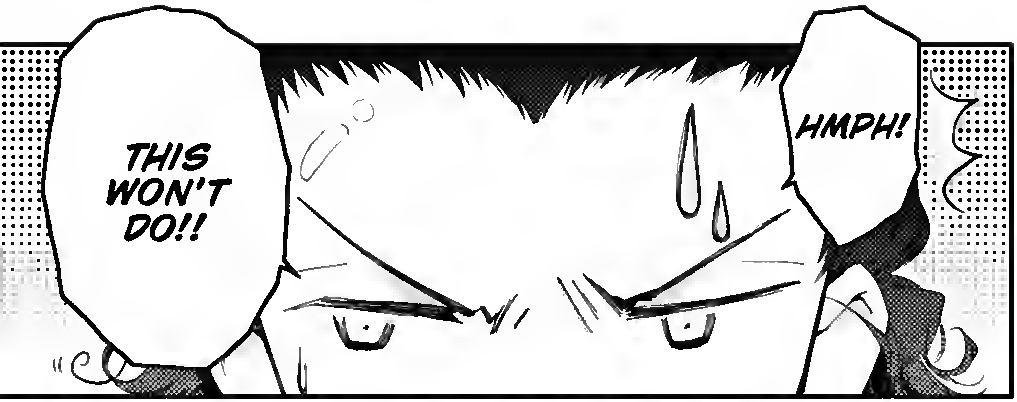
YAWWWN...
SO SLEEPY...
NNGH...
WE'VE BEEN RUNNING ALL OVER SINCE WE GOT TO THE CAPITAL...
GOTTA DO OUR BEST TO GUARD SAKAMOTO-SAN TOO...
PLOD
PLOD
KOTE-CHAN!
GOOD WORK TONIGHT!! TIME TO CHANGE GUARDS!
POP
JUST LEAVE THE REST UP TO ME—
HUH?
SILENCE


DID YOU CALL IT QUITS EARLY, YOU SNEAK!?
WELL, I'M UP NEXT, SO THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!
OH WELL! CAN'T BE HELPED, WORKING THIS LATE AND ALL...
YAWN..





Chapter 11: A Battered Oath


THIS WON'T DO!!
HMPH!

I SNUCK OUT OF THE MANSION TO SEE YOSHINO, BUT ALL WE'VE DONE IS TALK ABOUT KOTETSU!
DOOM
WHOOPS...
THAT'S RIGHT! WHY DID YOU HAVE TO COME ANYWAY?
WHA...!?
HEY, I DIDN'T WANT TO COME! HE MADE ME!
SNAP

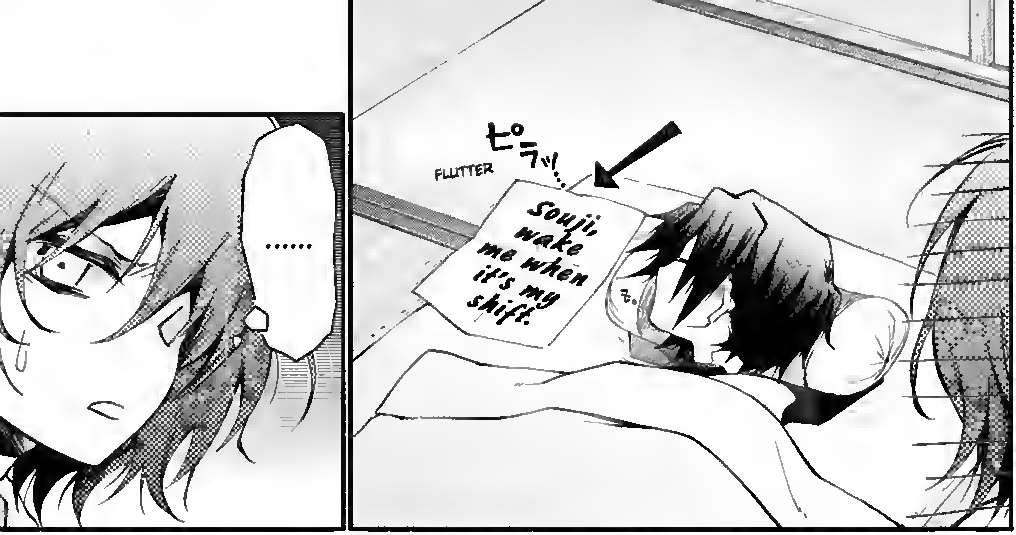
PLEASE UNDER-STAND... IF YOU SPEND TOO MUCH TIME WITH ME, TROUBLE MAY BEFALL YOU!
I'M A DANGER-OUS MAN...
I-I'M SURE THAT ISN'T SO...
NO, HIS LIFE'S IN DANGER, ALL RIGHT.
PEOPLE ARE AFTER HIM, Y'KNOW.

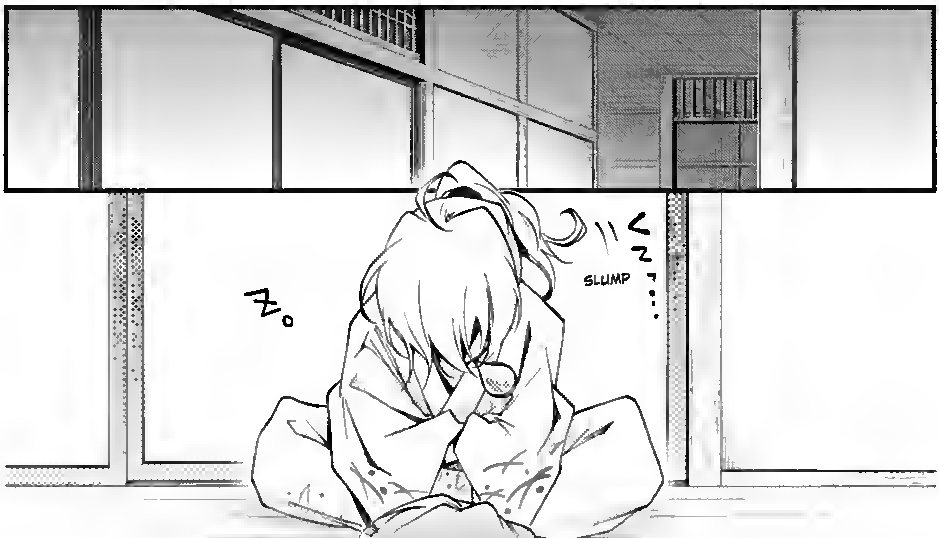
I'M SORRY, YOSHI-NO...
WE'LL HAVE OUR DATE AN-OTHER TIME!
WHAT !?
BUT WE'VE HARDLY SPOKEN ...

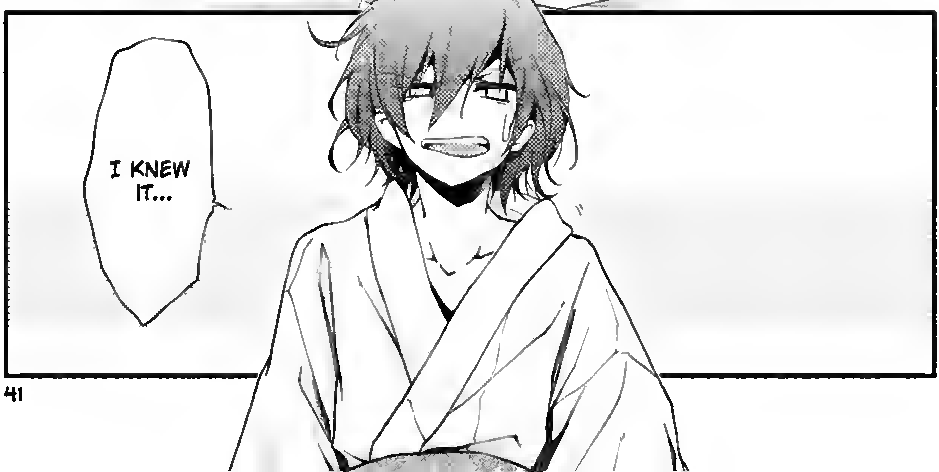
"HIS LIFE"...
COME TO THINK OF IT...
...WASN'T RYOUMA SAKAMOTO ASSAS-SINATED IN THE HISTORY I LEARNED?
THAT RE-MINDS ME, YOSHI-NO!
IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY-WHERE TO GO, TRY GOING TO THE OUMIYA SOY SAUCE SHOP IN KAWARA!
OUMI... YA?
IF YOU TELL THEM I SENT YOU, THEY SHOULD TAKE YOU ON.
I'LL BE BY THERE MYSELF SOON!
IF I GO THERE, WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN!?
GRAB
ガバ
INDEED! WE WILL MEET AGAIN!
BLUSH
ほおおお...

I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
YOU MUSTN'T UNDER-ESTIMATE ME!
CLENCH
I'LL WORK EVER SO HARD!!
HA-HA-HA! THAT'S MY GIRL!
CAN YOU MAKE IT THERE ON YOUR OWN?
HO-HO! SORRY, SORRY.
THAT'S JUST THE KIND OF GIRL YOU ARE!
F-FORGET THAT! RYOUMA, YOU—
WE CAN TALK LATER!
IF WE DON'T HURRY BACK, THEY'LL KNOW WE SNUCK OUT AND WE'LL CATCH HELL!
OH RIGHT...
WELL, WE CAN TALK LATER...
LET'S GET BACK TO THE SATSUMA MANSION!
AH!
RIGHT, THEN!
NOW! KOTETSU!

THANK YOU EVER SO MUCH!
I'LL... DO MY BEST!
WE'RE OFF, YOSHI-NO!!
TAKE CARE!
OH...
WAIT, YOU TWO!
?
?
NISHI-MURA-SAN IS STILL IN BED...
...BUT HE SHOULD BE ON GUARD NEXT...
I CAN'T SLEEP ...
RISE
むく
?


.....
ピラッ!
FLUTTER
Souji, wake me when it's my shift.
Z.

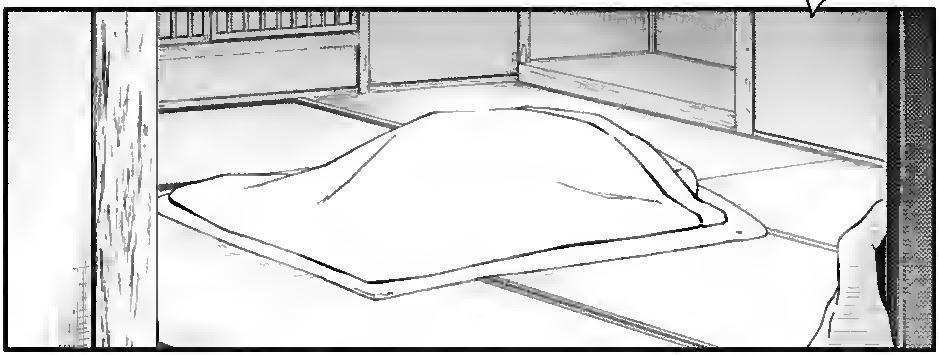

Zo
SLUMP


I KNEW IT...

SLIDE

HEY...
TUG
TUG
WHY DO I HAVE SUCH A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...?

GASP
IT CAN'T BE!
LORD SAKAMOTO ...!



GLARE
ZZZ...

FUME
COME ON...
HEY...
HEY!
FLOP
FLOP
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHIBUYA-SAN!
SHIBUYA-SAN...
FLOP

HE'S HERE ...
PHEW ...

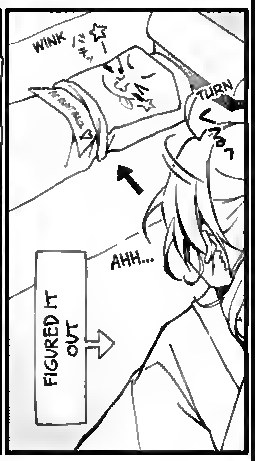
WHAM
SHOVE
WILL YOU JUST WAKE UP AL-READY !?
DOOR
STILL OUT
ZZZ...
ZZZZZZ...
SNAP
POP
AH...
CROSS-SECTION VIEW
SLAM
!?
OW... WHAT !?
HUH?
OOKI !?
BOLT
RISE
!?
.....
!!?
WHLID

SILENCE
GAHHH... OW, OW!
LUNGE
LORD SAKA-MOTO!
I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR OUR DREAD-FUL—
.....!?
IT CAN'T BE...!
FLAP

BE RIGHT BACK!♡

HUH?
WAIT!
OOKI!?
SLAM
CLATTER

IT CAN'T BE ...!!


WINK
TURN
AHH...
FIGURED IT OUT

.....!!

HAGK...
HUFF...
ALL I SEEM TO DO IS RUN...
HUFF...
...WHEN I'M WITH YOU...
HAFF...
HUFF...
CAN'T BE HELPED... HAVE TO HURRY BACK...
JUST A BIT FARTHER... BEFORE THEY REALIZE WE ESCAPED—
IT WASN'T AN ESCAPE...
WE JUST WALKED OUT.
HFF...
(GASP)
SNEAK
...YES, NOW'S OUR CHANCE!
NOD
NOD
SOFTLY!
SOFTLY, NOW!
NOD
CREAK
FLINCH
HEY!
WHOA!?

GLARE
SO IT WAS YOU...!!

TH...
O..!
OOKI...!

THE WORST POSSIBLE PERSON TO HAVE CATCH US...!!
PALE
DOOOOM

TAKE YOUR OWN LIFE, RIGHT HERE AND NOW!!
I ALWAYS DID...
...HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT YOU...
CREAK
CREAK
A BAD FEELING?
AAACK!
H-HE'S ALREADY TOTALLY LOSING IT!
C-
CALM DOWN...! WE WERE JUST, UH...
YOU BASTARD... DON'T YOU KNOW THE MEANING OF DUTY!!?

MY LIFE!?
MY...

W-W-W-WAIT A MINUTE!!
I DRAGGED HIM ALONG AGAINST HIS WILL! I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD TAKE MY OWN LIFE...!
WHA?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...!?
OH!
THERE YOU ARE, OOKI...!!

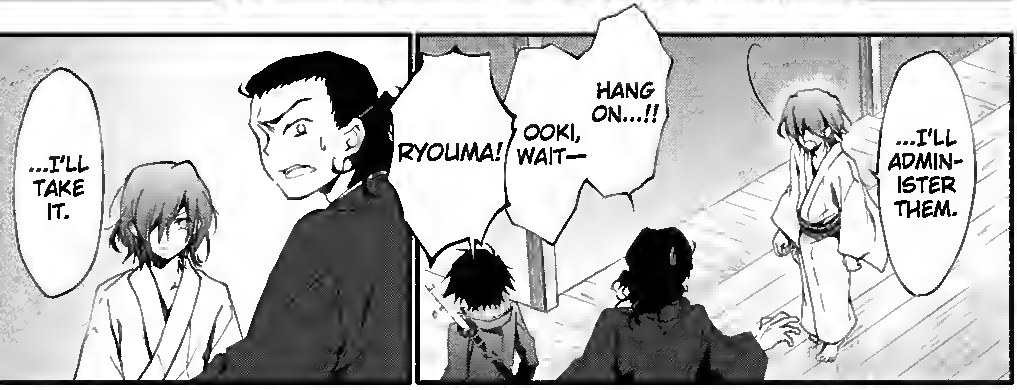
GH...
I FELL ASLEEP WHILE I WAS ON DUTY!
I OUGHT TO BE PUNISHED TOO!
MAKING ONLY KOTE-CHAN COMMIT SEPPUKU IS TOO HARSH... RIGHT!?
CREAK
.....!!
SA-GARA-SAN!

SH
KY
IF ANYONE CAN STOP OOKI, HE CAN...
OOKI TOLD ME EVERY-THING.
IS IT TRUE THAT YOU ABAN-DONED YOUR DUTIES?
KO-TETSU ...
.....!!
Y... YES...
I...DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE SUCH A BIG DEAL, WITH SEPPUKU AND STUFF...
YOU BAS-TARD ...!
IS THAT HOW YOU SPEAK OF YOUR WICKED—
OOKI, ENOUGH.

...KO-TETSU.
EVEN IF YOU HAD YOUR REASONS, YOUR DUTY WAS ABSO-LUTE.
FAILING TO CARRY OUT YOUR PART IS AKIN TO MAKING A MOCKERY OF YOUR FELLOW WAR-RIORS ...
—YOU MUST ACCEPT YOUR PUNISH-MENT.
P-PLEASE, LISTEN TO ME, SAGARA...!
I TOLD HIM TO COME ALONG AS MY GUARD AND DRAGGED HIM OUT WITH ME!
PLEASE, HAVE MERCY ON HIM!
THAT'S ALL THAT HAP-PENED!!
... PLEASE, RAISE YOUR HEAD, LORD RYOUMA.
CLAP

I THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING KOTETSU AND BRINGING HIM ALONG.
...ALTHOUGH I SUSPECT YOUR REASONS FOR GOING OUT MAY NOT HAVE REQUIRED HIS SERVICES.
GAAAAH.
HE SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME!
NEVERTHELESS, THIS IS AN ISSUE THAT CONCERNS OUR ROSHI BAND.
...AS ITS LEADER, I TOO AM RESPONSIBLE HERE.
KOTETSU.
I SENTENCE YOU TO FIFTY LASHES.

—!!


...I'LL TAKE IT.
RYOUMA!
OOKI, WAIT—
HANG ON...!!
...I'LL ADMIN-ISTER THEM.

I...
...MADE THE CHOICE, AFTER ALL.

...
COME.
TRAMP
TRAMP
LISTEN, SAGA-RA...
ISN'T FIFTY STROKES TOO MUCH, EVEN FOR—
TRAMP
KO-TE-TSU ...
...TENDS TO ACT ON THE IMPULSE OF HIS STRONG FEELINGS... NO THOUGHT TO THE LONG-TERM.
HIS BEHAVIOR EARLIER TOWARD THE SHINSENGUMI STARTLED ME AS WELL.
HIJIKATA RIDICULED HIM AS A NAIVE CHILD WITH NO SENSE OF REALITY.
HOWEVER, I...
...DO NOT BELIEVE KOTETSU IS SO CHILDISH AS ALL THAT.

THOUGH A MAN'S ACTIONS MAY SEEM HYPO-CRITICAL TO OTHERS...
...TO HIM, HIS FEELINGS ARE PURE TRUTH...
BUT TO LET THEM RUN WILD WITH NO THOUGHT FOR THE CONSEQUENCES IS TO ABANDON DUTY.
TO OTHERS ...
...AND TO ONESELF.
I BELIEVE HE NEEDS TO REALIZE THAT.

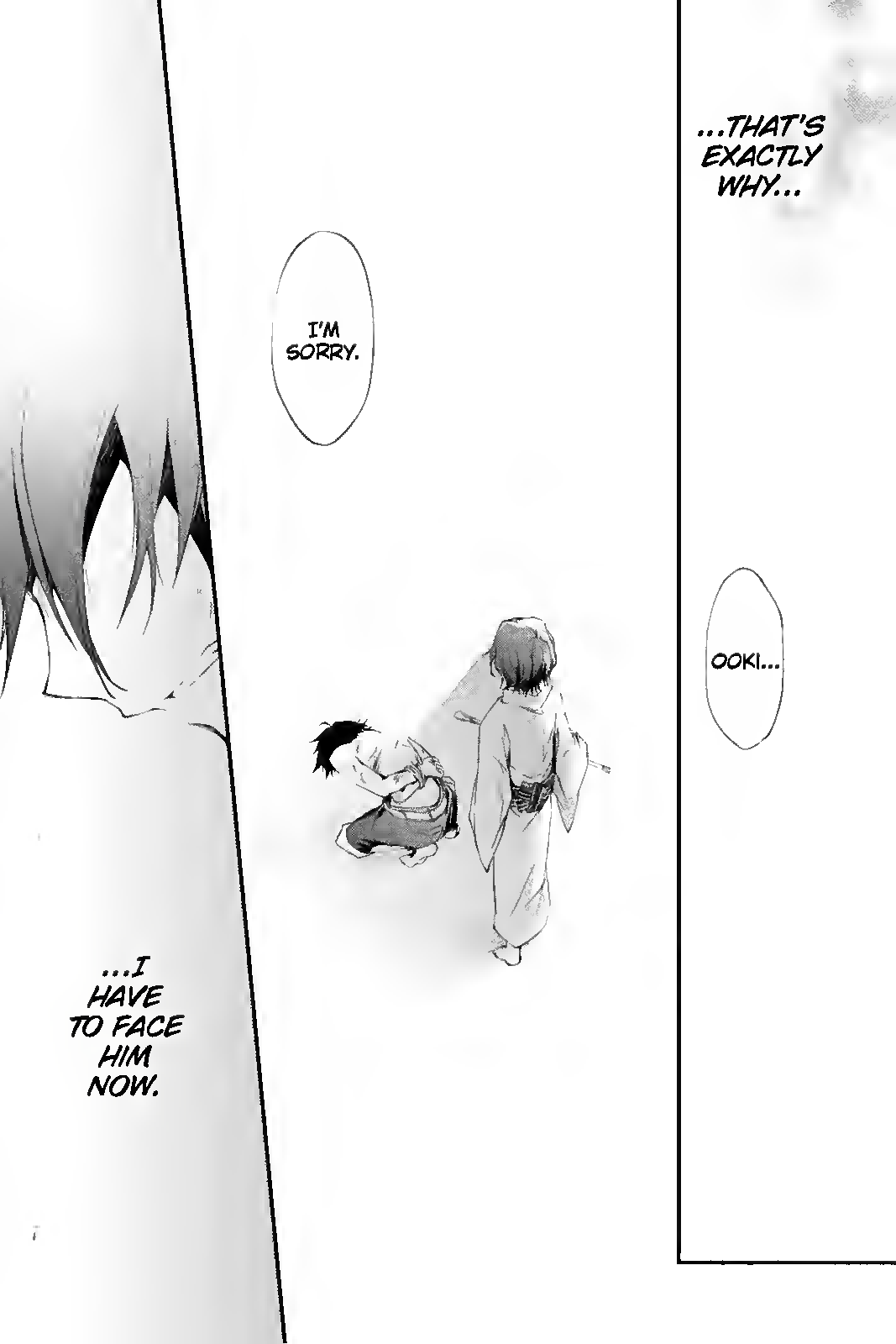
AAAH...!
CRACK!

...TEN.
HAAH...
HAAH...
CRACK
AAAH...!

...I'M SORRY.
...BE QUIET.
I... I'M SORRY ...
NGH!!
CRACK
I'M SORRY, OOKI.
I...
AKH!
CRACK
AUGH!
CRACK

CRACK
...FIF-TEEN.
—I JUST ... LUMPED YOU IN WITH YAYOI...
SIX-TEEN!
CRACK
I'VE NEVER REALLY SEEN HIM UNTIL NOW.
...!
...I WASN'T ... ... REALLY ...
...SEEING YOU.
GH... HA HA...
YOU DO LOOK EVEN MORE LIKE HIM... ... WITHOUT THAT THING AROUND YOUR NECK THOUGH ...
I TOLD YOU TO BE QUIET!!
I KNOW...

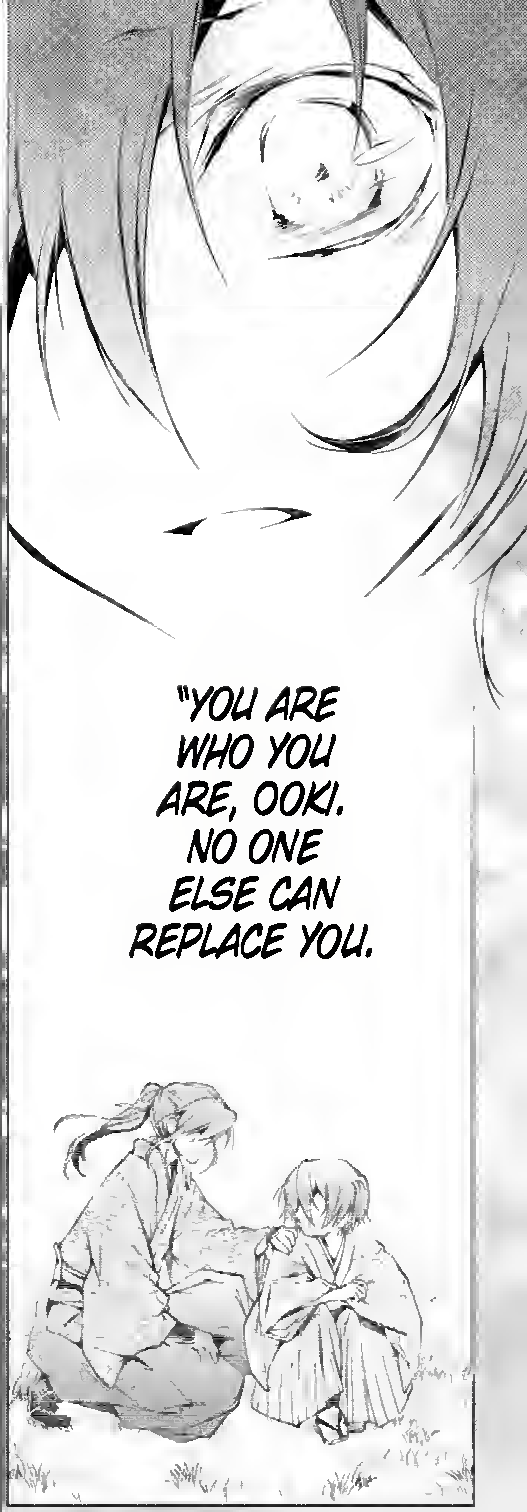
EVEN YAYOI...
HE WAS...
...ALWAYS BY MY SIDE, AND I STILL...
WHACK
—BUT...


...THAT'S EXACTLY WHY...
OOKI...
I'M SORRY.
...I HAVE TO FACE HIM NOW.

YOU'RE NOT ANYONE ELSE.
I HAVE TO FACE OOKI, WHO'S HERE WITH ME NOW.
YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE.

"YOU ARE MY BELOVED COMRADE."

"YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE, OOKI. NO ONE ELSE CAN REPLACE YOU.



DON'T WORRY.
IT DOESN'T HURT, SO...
...JUST KEEP DOING YOUR JOB.
CLENCH
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
FIFTY...!
CRACK

WHUMP
.....

THUMP
スタ
THUMP
スタ
THUMP
スタ…
スーッ
SLIDE

.....
PLOP
TOGETHER ...
...LET'S WORK TO MAKE SAGARA'S DREAM COME TRUE.
WHIRL
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

BLUUUSH
あああああああ
"WHAT THE HECK, MAN"
PFFT...
ONE ORANGE...? SOME GET-WELL PRESENT...
BUT SERI-OUSLY...
LURCH
WH...!?
Y... (YOU BASTARD!)
AWA...!? (YOU WERE AWAKE!?)
SLAM
DOOR→
TRMBL
PFFT!
GEEZ... YOU... FREAK OUT TOO MUCH...
PFFT. HA HA HA...
TRMBL
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO PAY FOR IT!!
...YOUUU...
TH—
THE NEXT TIME YOU CAUSE TROUBLE FOR THE CAPTAIN...

THOSE BLISTERS WON'T HEAL IF YOU BANDAGE 'EM.
...WHO TOOK SO MANY PRACTICE SWINGS TO PSYCH YOURSELF UP FOR THE TASK.
YOU'RE THE ONE...
MIND YOUR OWN BUSI-NESS.
...THE CAPTAIN HAS A HIGH OPINION OF YOU.
DON'T FORGET THAT.

I'LL REMEM-BER.

IT...
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!
吉
両
吉
SAIDANI-HAN SENT ME WITH A RECOMMENDA-TION.
MY NAME IS YOSHINO!
YES, SIR!
HERE, PUT THIS ON! AND DO YOUR BEST!!
OUR SHOP'S GOT A LONG HISTORY IN THE SOY BUSINESS, YOU KNOW!
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE HAD A HARD TIME OF IT, BUT WHAT A NICE, CHEERFUL GIRL YOU ARE!
BOW
HMM, SAI-DANI-HAN SENT YOU?
I'M GOING TO WORK MY VERY HARDEST, SO I HOPE WE'LL GET ALONG!

Chapter 12:
Shadows Fall on the Capital

Scarlet
EMPIRE

THE IMPERIAL RESTO-RATION... IT'S JUST A FACADE!
THE SHOGUNATE NEVER INTENDED TO HAND OVER POWER TO THE IMPERIAL COURT!
WHAP
WHAP
DO YOU UNDER-STAND, OOKUBO? THIS IS HOW THE TOKU-GAWAS OPERATE!
THEY WEAR A PUBLIC FACE OF RESPECT FOR THE COURT BUT CON-TINUE TO CLING TO THE REAL POWER IN PRIVATE ...
... THINKING WE OF THE NEW GOVERN-MENT SHUT OUT OF THE AVENUES OF POWER, WILL COME BEGGING TO THEM!
AHH, DAMN THEM ALL!
IT IS AS YOU SAY...
...LORD IWAKURA ...
TOMOMI IWAKURA
AND WHAT OF EDO?
HAS WAR STILL NOT BROKEN OUT THERE?

WASN'T THE WHOLE REASON THE SATSUMA CALLED ON THAT SOUZOU SAGARA FELLOW TO REGAIN A PRETEXT FOR WAR?
AND WHAT ABOUT SAIGOU!? IS HE STILL FALLING FOR THAT MAN'S SMOOTH TALK!?
GRUMBLE
SO WEAK-MINDED FOR SUCH A STRONG MAN...
GRUMBLE
THAT IS TRUE, BUT...
...IT SEEMS TO ME THAT LORD SAGARA HAS BEEN SIDETRACKED BY RYOUMA SAKAMOTO, WHO STRONGLY OPPOSES GOING TO WAR...

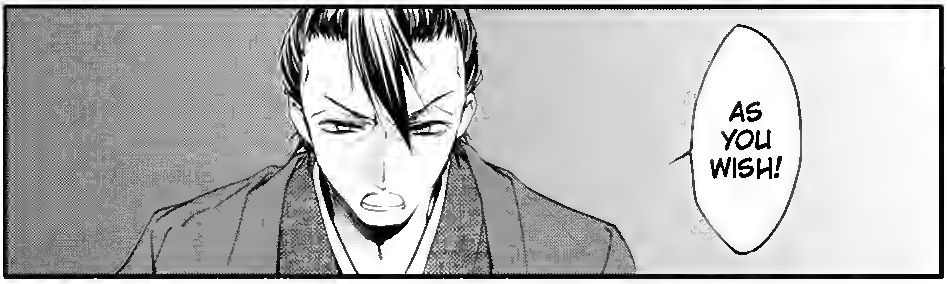
RYOUMA SAKAMOTO...
FROWN

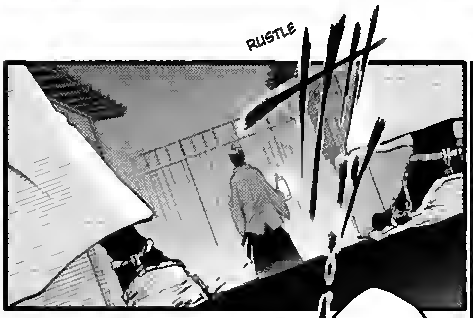
IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT MAN SOON, HE COULD CAUSE ALL MANNER OF TROUBLE...

AND THAT SAGARA!
IF HE'S NO USE TO US, THEN WE MUST FIND OTHER MEN WHOM WE CAN USE!
DO YOU WANT TO SEE THIS FLAG I COMMISSIONED GO TO WASTE!?
FLUTTER
!!!
THAT'S ...!

A BROCADE BANNER ...!!
IF WE FLY THIS, WE'LL BE THE TRUE IMPERIAL ARMY!
IN OTHER WORDS, ANYONE WHO DARES BEAR ARMS AGAINST US WILL BE DEFYING THE EMPEROR ...AND A TRAITOR!
THE BROCADE BANNER IS THE SIGN OF THE EMPEROR'S ARMY!
WHICH MEANS THE SHOGUNATE'S ARMY WILL BE UNABLE TO RAISE A HAND AGAINST US...
MY LORD, I AM TRULY AMAZED!!

I'VE MADE PREPA-RATIONS THIS FAR, AT LEAST.
AS FOR THE REST, ALL WE CAN DO IS PRESS FOR WAR...
HURRY AND STIR THINGS UP IN EDO.


AS YOU WISH!


RUSTLE

YOU MUST BE OOKUBO OF THE SATSUMA.

LORD SAGARA ...
HE IS INDEED A VIRTU-OUS MAN BUT TOO TENDER-HEARTED ...
TO BRING THIS WAR ABOUT, WE'LL NEED MEN WITH A MORE RUTH-LESS SIDE AS WELL... BUT...

LOOM
SKSH
SKSH
HMM ...?
WHO ...
WHO GOES THERE!?
CL TTER
YOU COUNTRY SAMURAI, MAKING LIGHT OF THE SHOGUNATE...
YOU CAN'T KEEP DOING AS YOU PLEASE.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO DIE!
CLANG
HAVE AT YOU!

!!?
SLASH

WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
... WHAT YOU SAID ...
THIS ISN'T ...
CLANK
STAB
WHUMP
WHUMP
WHEN I HEARD OF THEIR ASSASSINATION PLOT...
...I ACTED THE PART OF THEIR ALLY...
SCRAPE
NO MATTER HOW SYMPATHETIC THE CAPITAL MAY BE TO THE IMPERIALIST CAUSE, IT'S DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO WALK ALONE...
...LORD OOKUBO.
!!
YOU KNOW WHO I—
NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR YOU TO DIE...

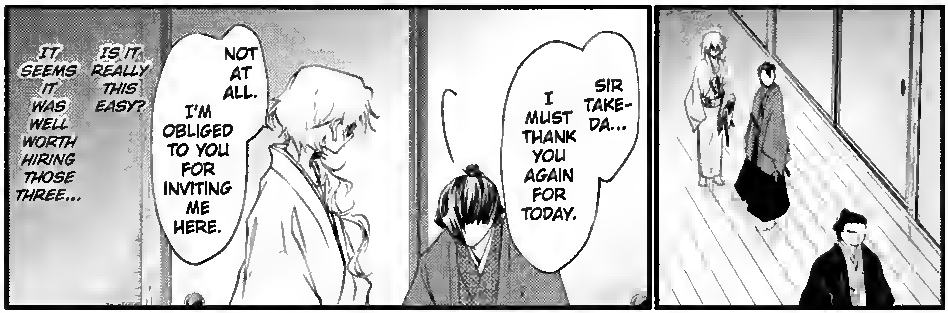
THREE THUGS IN A SINGLE MOMENT ...!!
NO, MORE THAN THAT...
NOT ONE OF THEM COULD PUT A SCRATCH ON HIM!!
AN ALLY... OR IS IT SAFE TO THINK OF HIM AS SUCH?
THE SATSUMA ARE IN NEED...
...OF MEN OF ACTION SUCH AS YOURSELF!
WE COULD USE HIM!!
CLANK
WELL, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME—
PLEASE, WAIT!
PLEASE COME WITH ME TO THE SATSUMA MANSION!

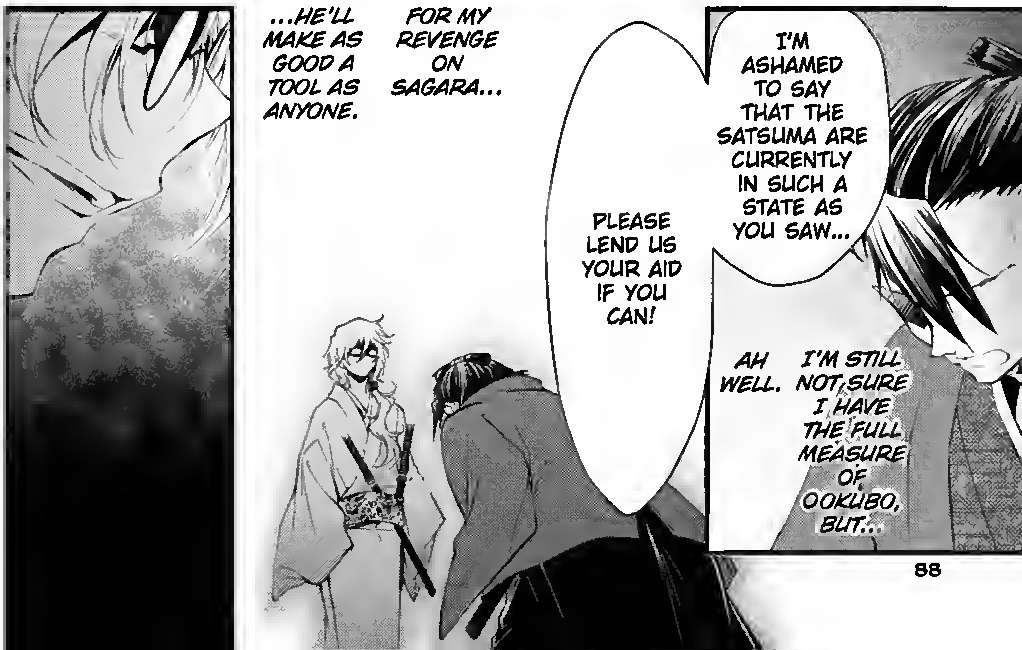
COME, COME!
RIGHT THIS WAY...
SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING, SAIGOU.
I'M AFRAID I MET WITH SOME TROUBLE ON THE WAY...
CLATTER
SLIDE
WHO IS THIS?
RUSTLE
THE MAN TO WHOM I OWE MY LIFE!

TAKEDA-SAN IS A WARRIOR FROM THE MITO DOMAIN AND A BORN IMPERIAL-IST!
IT SEEMS HE TURNED HIS BACK ON THE SHOGUNATE SOME TIME AGO AND INFILTRATED THEIR RANKS AS A DECOY!
SHUUHEI TAKEDA...
...IS MY NAME.
THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN...
...
SURELY HE'LL BE OF FAR MORE USE TO US THAN THAT LORD SAGARA!
HE'S QUITE THE DARING FELLOW!

THIS "EIGHT-POINT PLAN FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT" IS THE FOUNDING PLAN FOR A NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM TO REPLACE THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE ...
IT'S THE VERY SWEAT AND BLOOD OF SAKAMOTO!
THE MAIN POINT OF THIS PLAN IS TO GATHER MEN OF ABILITY FROM ACROSS THE NATION TO THE IMPERIAL COURT!
IT'S CLEAR HE MEANS TO OPEN THE EMPTIED SEATS OF LEADERSHIP TO THESE MEN!
THAT SAKAMOTO HAS GREAT PLANS!
IS HE QUITE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS?
IT SEEMS CLEAR TO ME THAT SAKAMOTO WILL GIVE THAT SEAT TO YOSHINOBU TOKUGAWA!
THE IMPERIAL RESTORATION SAKAMOTO CREATED HELPS NO ONE MORE THAN THEM... THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE!
LISTEN, SAIGOU... OPEN YOUR EYES!
OUR NATION IS RUNNING OUT OF TIME!
IF SIR TAKEDA HAD NOT BEEN THERE TODAY, I WOULD HAVE LOST MY HEAD!
ARE YOU ASKING ME TO SIMPLY SET THAT ASIDE!?
N... NOT AT ALL...

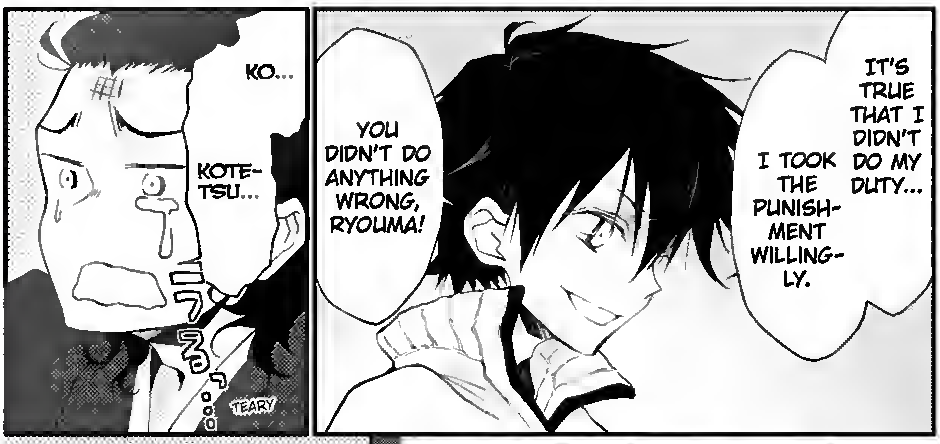
SO THIS IS THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS WITHIN THE SATSUMA...
OOKUBO IS ENTIRELY ON THE SIDE OF TAKING THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE SHOGUNATE AND ATTACKING.
SAIGOU IS BACKING SAKAMOTO FOR NOW, BUT...
...THAT SITUATION COULD SHIFT AT ANY TIME.


SIR TAKE-DA...
I MUST THANK YOU AGAIN FOR TODAY.
NOT AT ALL. I'M OBLIGED TO YOU FOR INVITING ME HERE.
IS IT REALLY THIS EASY?
IT SEEMS IT WAS WELL WORTH HIRING THOSE THREE...


FOR MY REVENGE ON SAGARA...
...HE'LL MAKE AS GOOD A TOOL AS ANYONE.
PLEASE LEND US YOUR AID IF YOU CAN!
I'M ASHAMED TO SAY THAT THE SATSUMA ARE CURRENTLY IN SUCH A STATE AS YOU SAW...
AH WELL.
I'M STILL NOT SURE I HAVE THE FULL MEASURE OF OOKUBO, BUT...

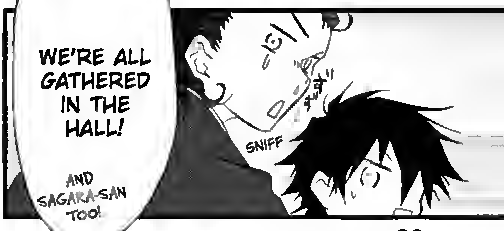
IF I'M GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU...
...I WOULD BE HON-ORED.
I'M SORRY, KOTE-TSU!!
CLAP
D-DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT SO MUCH...
ZIP

I TOLD YOU, GIVE IT A REST!
SERIOUSLY, I'M ALREADY OVER IT, OKAY?
WHAM
WHAM
I'M SO, SO VERY SORRY!!
WHAM
...IT'S ALL MY FAULT YOU WENT THROUGH SO MUCH PAIN YESTERDAY...
OH, BUT...


KO...
KOTE-TSU...
TEARY
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG, RYOUMA!
I TOOK THE PUNISH-MENT WILLING-LY.
IT'S TRUE THAT I DIDN'T DO MY DUTY...

POINT
HE SAYS A LETTER ARRIVED FROM VICE-CAPTAIN MIZUHARA IN EDO!
MUNCH

SLAM
HELLO, HELLO! KOTE-CHAN! AND RYOUMA-SAN!
OWW!
LAY OFF MY BACK!
OHH!
I'M SO SORRY!
GRAB


WE'RE ALL GATHERED IN THE HALL!
AND SAGARA-SAN TOO!
SNIFF

THEY SUCCEEDED IN ARRESTING THE TRAITORS, BUT...
ON THE NIGHT WE SET OUT FOR THE CAPITAL...
...THE AZUMAYA TRULY DID MOUNT AN ATTACK ON THE SATSUMA MANSION.
...IT SEEMS SHIKYOU KAWASE ALONE WAS ABLE TO SLIP AWAY.

!!!
A FEW DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE THEN...
MOST PROBABLY HE IS ALREADY HERE IN THE CAPITAL, PURSUING LORD SAKAMOTO.

KAWASE ...
HE'S IN KYOTO TOO...?

CAPTAIN.
THE AZUMAYA ARE A COVERT ARM OF THE SHOGUNATE.
THIS ASSOCIATION SHOULD FORCE THEM TO BE WARY AROUND US, FOR FEAR THAT THEIR OWN MISDEEDS MAY BE EXPOSED...
THIS COULD BE OUR MOMENT TO LIBERATE EDO FROM THE SHOGUNATE!

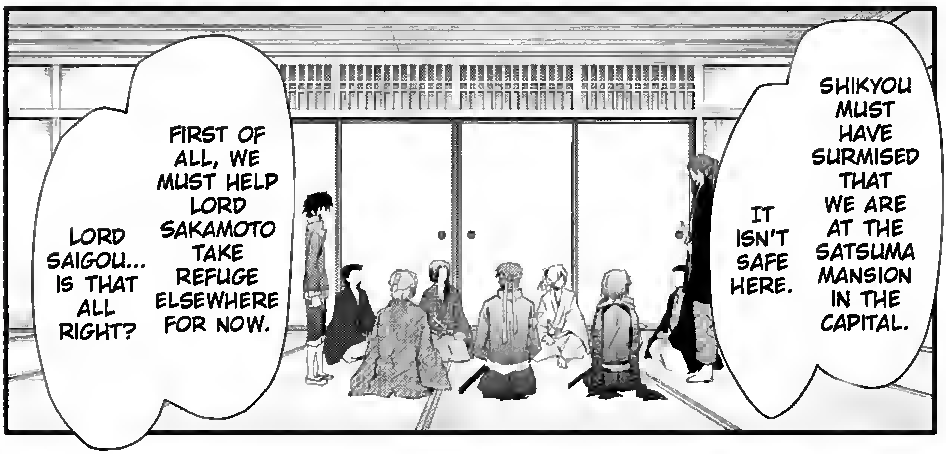
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE SHIKYOU MAY BE LURKING.
HE IS A MAN OF CONSIDERABLE SKILL ...
GOING FORWARD, WE MUST AVOID WORKING ALONE FOR ANY REASON AND MOVE ONLY IN GROUPS OF TWO OR MORE.

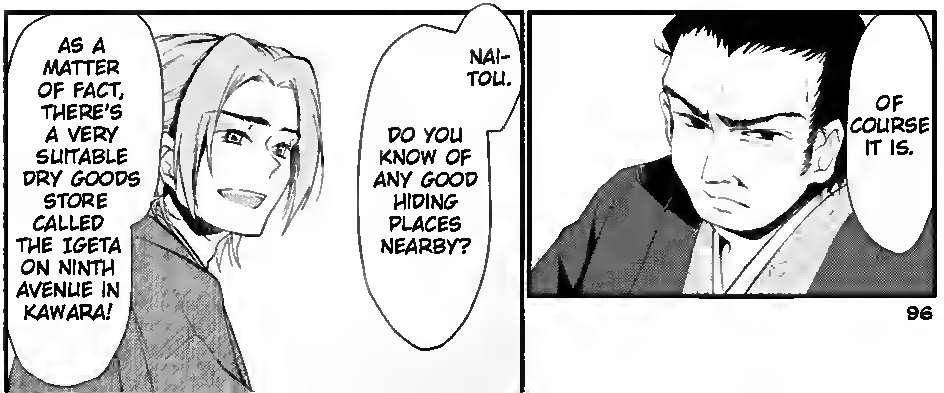
I HAVE ALSO SOUGHT THE COOPERATION OF LORD IMUTA AND LORD MASUMITSU OF THE SATSUMA WARRIORS.
I HAVE ORDERED MIZUHARA TO WORK TOWARD DISPERSING THE MILITARY MIGHT OF THE SHOGUNATE UNTIL WE RETURN TO EDO.
IN-DEED.
HOWEVER, EDO REMAINS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SHOGUNATE FOR NOW...
AS THE ONE WHO WILL GUIDE THE PEOPLE INTO OUR NEW ERA WHILE THINKING OF THE FUTURE OF JAPAN, WE MUST BE SURE TO PROTECT YOUR LIFE, LORD SAKAMO—
SA
MM...
WHAT HE?
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO PROTECT LORD SAKAMOTO FIRST.
COULD YOU PHRASE THAT IN A LESS BLOOD-THIRSTY WAY, SOUJI?
NO GOOD AT ALL
VERY DISTURBING
CLENCH
SO WHEN WE GET BACK TO EDO, WE CAN GO WILD ON IMUTA-SAN AND THE REST!
AHH!
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'VE GOTTA LISTEN TO ME!
LEAP

RYOUMA'S ...
...LIFE IS IN DANGER!
...YES ...?
WE WERE ALREADY WELL AWARE OF—
NO, IT'S NOT THAT!
I...I DUNNO HOW TO SAY THIS, BUT WE'RE IN TROUBLE, FOR REAL! SHIKYOU KAWASE...I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT HIM!
RYOUMA SAKAMOTO IS GONNA GET ASSASSINATED! HE COULD BITE IT ANY DAY NOW!
WHA...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
BITE IT...?
BITE WHAT?
YOU MEAN ME?
HUH... ASSASSI-NATED?
WHY, YOU...
SPOUTING INSCRU-TABLE NONSENSE AGAIN... IS THERE NO END TO YOUR RASH BEHAVI—
WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?
LORD SAKAMOTO SEEMS RATHER SPOOKED...

KOTE-TSU. YOU...
...KNOW ABOUT THIS, DON'T YOU?
...I DO.
CLENCH
CAP...
...TAIN?

I'M SORRY... I CAN'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHEN IT HAPPENED...
BUT I THINK IT'S SOMETIME SOON!
IN MY HISTORY TEXTBOOK, I'M SURE IT WAS RIGHT AFTER THE SHOGUNATE ENDED OR SOMETHING...
THE END OF THE SHOGUNATE...
YOU MEAN THE RECENT IMPERIAL RESTORATION?
IN THAT CASE, WHAT YOU SPEAK OF IS INDEED NOT FAR OFF...


SHIKYOU MUST HAVE SURMISED THAT WE ARE AT THE SATSUMA MANSION IN THE CAPITAL.
IT ISN'T SAFE HERE.
FIRST OF ALL, WE MUST HELP LORD SAKAMOTO TAKE REFUGE ELSEWHERE FOR NOW.
LORD SAIGOU... IS THAT ALL RIGHT?


OF COURSE IT IS.
NAITOU.
DO YOU KNOW OF ANY GOOD HIDING PLACES NEARBY?
AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE'S A VERY SUITABLE DRY GOODS STORE CALLED THE IGETA ON NINTH AVENUE IN KAWARA!

...!!
I HEREBY ENTRUST YOU WITH FULL AUTHORITY TO GUARD LORD SAKAMOTO.
IN THAT CASE...
...KOTE-TSU.
THIS TIME...
...YOU MUST SAVE LORD SAKAMOTO IN YOUR OWN WAY.

...ALL RIGHT.
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME!

Chapter 13: Looming Darkness

TA-DAA!
ALL RIGHT! WE'VE ARRIVED!
PHEW...
HUH?
WHAT'S THIS PLACE CALLED? "KIN-MIYA" ...?
LORD SAKA-MOTO...!
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
ISN'T THIS THE OUMIYA SHOP RUN BY THE TOSA CLAN? IT'S FAR TOO DANGER-OUS!
OU... OU-MIYA, HUH...?
I BEG OF YOU, TAKE MY ADVICE AND GO TO THE IGETA DRY GOODS SHOP...
WHAT? THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY, NAITOU! EVERY PLACE IS DANGER-OUS IN THE CAPI-TAL! AH HA HA! THAT'S WHY I'M WOR-RIED...

...I CAN'T KEEP RELYING ON THE SATSUMA TO LOOK AFTER ME FOREVER.
I HAVE TO DECIDE MY OWN FATE.
HMM...
THAT'S THE KIND OF MAN I AM...
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHICH PLACES ARE SAFE OR NOT, SO...
...IF RYOUMA SAYS THIS PLACE IS GOOD, LET'S GO WITH THAT.
I'LL STILL PROTECT YOU, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS OR WHERE WE ARE.
KO...
GRAB
KOTE-TSU!
YOU'RE... SUCH A GOOD LAD!
WHOAAA!
TOO CLOSE, TOO CLOSE!!

I WANT TO LIVE UP TO THAT THIS TIME.
PLUS...
THIS MISSION TO GUARD YOU...
IT MEANS SAGARA ...
...BELIEVES IN ME ENOUGH TO TRUST ME, DESPITE EVERY-THING.
I... I DON'T ...
...WANT TO LET YOU DIE.
OBVI-OUSLY.
I SEE... THEN I SHALL INFORM LORD SAGARA TO THAT EFFECT AT ONCE.
WHAT IS IT WITH YOU GUYS AND ASSUMING THAT STUFF?
I WAS ONLY JOKING!
I SEE...
AH HA HA HA HA HA...
THAT'S NOT EVEN CLOSE TO WHAT I MEANT...
...BUT THERE'S A GIRL CALLED ORYOU ON WHOM MY HEART IS ALREADY SET...
I...I'M VERY FLATTERED BY YOUR FEELINGS, KOTETSU...
...
PAT

MIYA-SAKA-SAN.
NO MATTER WHAT, YOU MUSTN'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF HIM FOR A MOMENT!
I'M OFF!
SALUTE
GOT IT!
BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!
SALUTE
GA HA HA HA!
YOU DON'T TRUST ME AT ALL, DO YOU?
KO
NA
THAT'S YOUR OWN FAULT!
PHEW...
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE STAYED IN THIS ROOM...
SO THIS IS THE OUMIYA, HUH...?
I GUESS YOSHINO MUST BE HERE BY NOW TOO...
OUMIYA... OUMIYA...I WAS THINKING ABOUT IT BEFORE, BUT...
...I FEEL LIKE I'VE HEARD THAT NAME SOME-WHERE—
SAY...
...KOTE-TSU.

ISN'T IT...
...ABOUT TIME YOU TOLD ME TOO?
YOU KNOW...
WHAT ERA YOU CAME FROM?

HARBORING HIM WAS THE LAST THING THE SATSUMA WANTED TO DO.
RYOUMA SAKA-MOTO...
THE SHOGUN-ATE MAKES LIGHT OF THE IMPERIAL COURT... IN OTHER WORDS, THEY'RE TRAITORS.
SAKAMOTO HIMSELF DEFENDS THE SHOGUNATE AND CONSPIRES WITH OUR FOREIGN ENEMIES...
HE'S NO MORE THAN A TRAITOR WHO SEEKS TO RUIN JAPAN.
VERY TRUE...
IF SUCH A TRAITOR WERE TO VANISH, IT WOULD BE ALL THE BETTER FOR JAPAN...
HEH.
... TAKEDA-SAN.

ARE YOU...
...A MAN WHO COULD KILL RYOUMA SAKAMOTO?
THE CAPITAL AT NIGHT IS TERRIBLY UNSAFE, YOU KNOW...
RUSTLE
...
CLANK
SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE

IT WOULD HARDLY BE STRANGE ...
CLACK
...IF EVEN RYOUMA SAKAMOTO HIMSELF MET HIS END ON THE STREETS AT NIGHT.

SLIDE
THMP

THE ONLY REMAINING OBSTACLE IS THE ROSHI BAND LED BY SAGARA THAT GUARDS SAKAMOTO...

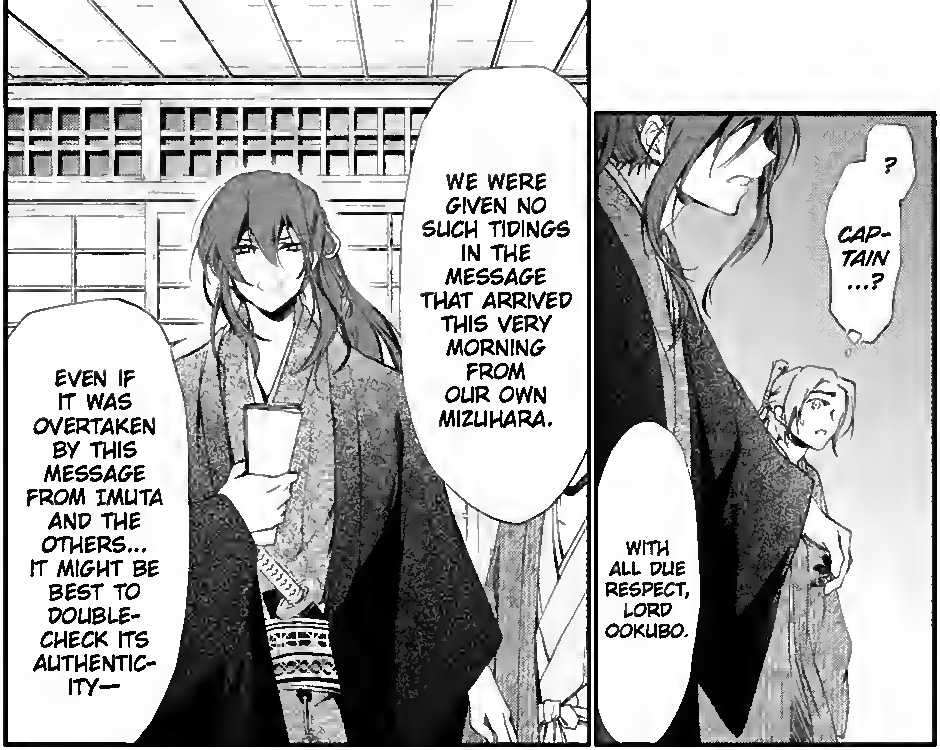
AS LONG AS WE HAVE THE BROCADE BANNER, JUSTICE IS ON OUR SIDE!
IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM, EVEN IF SAIGOU DOESN'T MANAGE TO DO THE DEED.
HIS DAYS ARE NUMBERED!
WELL, IF HE DOES FAIL, THOSE MAD DOGS IN THE SHINSENGUMI AND THE MIMAWARIGUMI WILL STILL BE AFTER SAKAMOTO.
TAKEDA... DOES HE MEAN TO IMPLY THAT HE'LL DESTROY SAKAMOTO THIS VERY NIGHT...?

OOKUBO OF THE SATSUMA...
A CUNNING MAN, WILLING TO USE ANY MEANS IN PURSUIT OF HIS GOALS...
WHAT A FINE JUSTICE YOU CLAIM TO SERVE...
スト・・・
THMP
NONE OF THEM MATTER TO ME.
THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OUTBREAK OF WAR...
THE RIGHT OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO RULE...
THE LIFE OF RYOUMA SAKAMOTO...
AS LONG AS YOU END UP WEEPING AND BROKEN...
SAGARA...
RUSTLE
SOON, YOUR ENEMY WILL BE DESTROYED...
SOON, NOW...

RIGHT?
SEITAROU...

MIGHT YOU HAVE A MOMENT TO TALK?
I SEE...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR REPORT. PLEASE CONTINUE TO—
LORD SAGARA.
LORD OOKU-BO.
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MATTER?
PLEASE DON'T GET UP.
I'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD FROM IMUTA AND THE OTHERS AT THE SATSUMA MANSION IN EDO.
THEY ASK THAT YOU AND YOUR MEN RETURN TO EDO WITH ALL POSSIBLE HASTE.
WHA...!?

THEY SAY THE MILITARY MIGHT OF THE SHOGUNATE IN EDO IS GROWING.
PLEASE, LORD SAKAMOTO, LEAVE AFFAIRS HERE IN THE CAPITAL TO US AND GO ASSIST IMUTA AND THE OTHERS.
B—
BUT THAT'S ...
YOU ALL ...
... ARRIVED RECENTLY TO GUARD LORD SAKAMOTO ...
IS HIS LORDSHIP HERE IN THE MANSION NOW?
OH!
NO...
AT THE IGETA, THEN?
HE'S—
SHFF
NAITOU HAS JUST RETURNED TO FETCH A FEW THINGS HE'D FORGOT-TEN.
BY NOW, LORD SAKAMOTO SHOULD BE FINISHED MOVING TO A NEW LOCATION, ACCORDING TO PLAN...


WE WERE GIVEN NO SUCH TIDINGS IN THE MESSAGE THAT ARRIVED THIS VERY MORNING FROM OUR OWN MIZUHARA.
EVEN IF IT WAS OVERTAKEN BY THIS MESSAGE FROM IMUTA AND THE OTHERS... IT MIGHT BE BEST TO DOUBLE-CHECK ITS AUTHENTIC-ITY—
?
CAP-TAIN ...?
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, LORD OOKUBO.

I'M TELLING YOU, WE HAVEN'T THE TIME FOR THAT!!

LORD SAGA-RA...
...ARE YOU SAYING YOU FEEL UNEASY ABOUT LEAVING LORD SAKAMOTO IN OUR HANDS?
!!
I CERTAINLY DID NOT INTEND ANY SUCH...
YOU CALL YOUR-SELVES THE SATSUMA ROSHI BAND.
IF YOU ARE TO WEAR OUR NAME...
...YOU MUST ALSO ABIDE BY OUR WAY OF DOING THINGS.

IN THAT CASE...
...I MUST CONSENT.

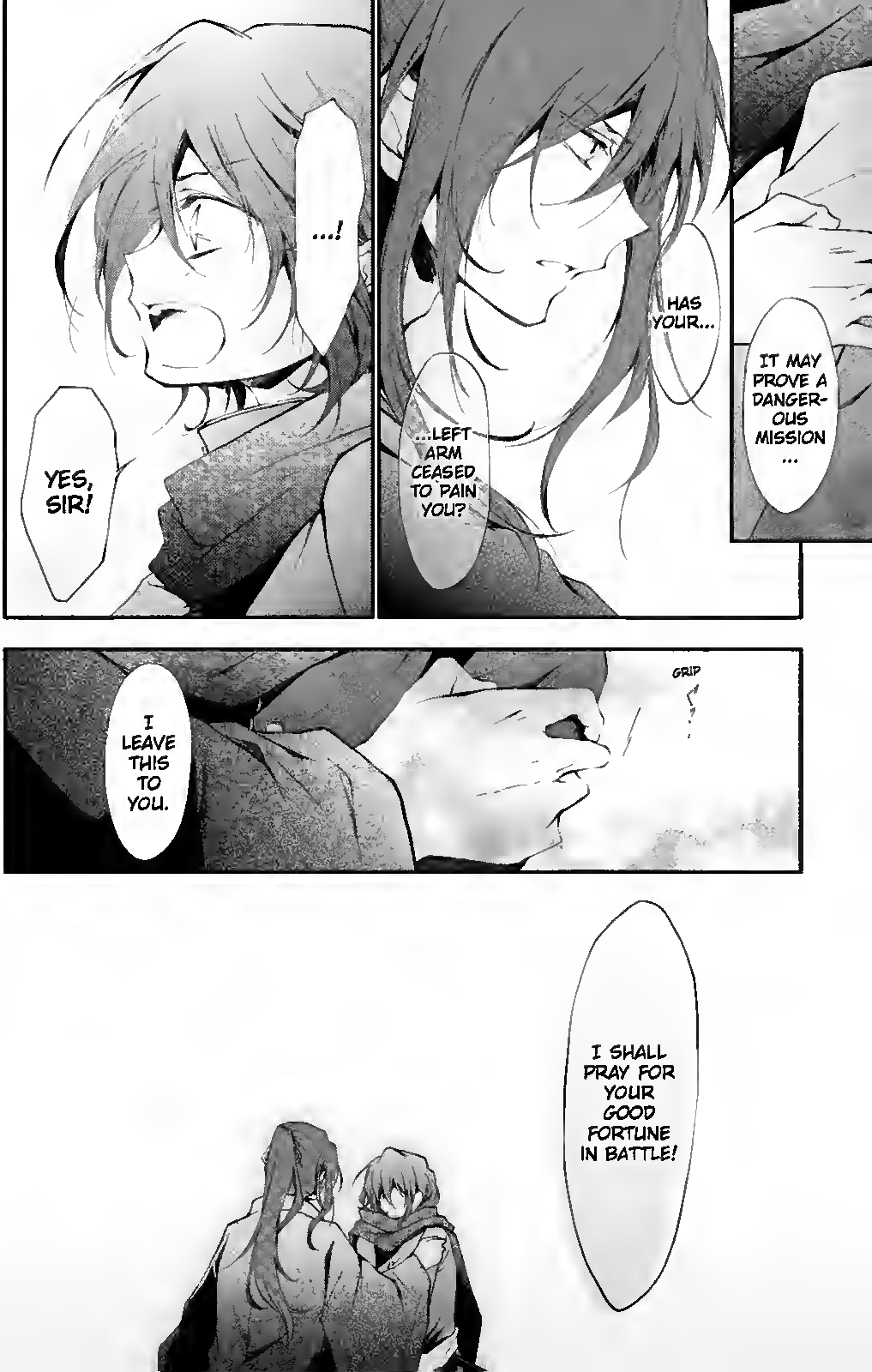
...LEAVE LORD SAKAMOTO BEHIND SO SUDDENLY TO GO TO EDO...?
MUST WE REALLY ...

HOWEVER, I CANNOT DENY THAT LORD OOKUBO'S SPEECH AND CONDUCT CONCERN ME.
TO THAT END...
IT SEEMS THEY WISH US TO DEPART FOR EDO BEFORE SUNSET TONIGHT.
AS THE SATSUMA ROSHI BAND, WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO DISOBEY...

LORD RYOUMA AND KOTETSU ARE THERE...
WE WILL SET OUT AHEAD OF YOU FOR EDO.
HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO ASSIST KOTETSU AND BRING LORD RYOUMA ALONG WITH YOU TO EDO TOO.
OOKI.
PLEASE REMAIN IN THE CAPITAL WITH NAITOU AND HEAD FOR THE OUMIYA IN KAWARA.
!!

YOU ALL MUST THINK ONLY OF RETURNING TO US ALIVE.
...I WILL ACCEPT THE FULL BURDEN OF RESPON-SIBILITY.
THIS RUNS COUNTER TO THE WISHES OF LORD OOKUBO, BUT...

PAT
...!
AS YOU WISH!


...!
YES, SIR!
...LEFT ARM CEASED TO PAIN YOU?
HAS YOUR...
IT MAY PROVE A DANGER-OUS MISSION ...
GRIP
I LEAVE THIS TO YOU.
I SHALL PRAY FOR YOUR GOOD FORTUNE IN BATTLE!

I CAME FROM THE YEAR 2017 A.D.
—AND THAT ABOUT SUMS UP HOW I GOT HERE...
SILENCE シーーーーーン...
...HUH?
WHAT?
WHOOSH
"A.D."!
OHHH, NOW I REMEMBER!
FLINCH
THAT'S WHAT THAT 'MERIKAN WAS TALKING ABOUT!
WHOA!
THAT WAS IT!
HUH!? WHAT!?
MUMBLE
UH...
HELLO ...?
MUMBLE
DOES HE NOT BELIEVE ME?
"AYDEE" ...?
TWO THOU-SAND ...
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
HMM...

M...
"MERI-KAN"?
LET'S SEE, LAST YEAR WHEN WE MET...
...HE SAID IT WAS 1866 ...
OH, NO WAY! DO THEY NOT USE THE WESTERN CALENDAR YET IN THIS ERA...?
SO IF HE KNOWS ABOUT IT...HE REALLY IS AHEAD OF HIS TIME!
SO THAT MEANS THIS YEAR IS...
... 1867 ...
IN THAT CASE...
...YOU'RE FROM A CENTURY AND A HALF IN THE FUTURE...?
GRAB
!!
A HUN-DRED ...
...AND FIFTY YEARS ...
GULP

KOTE-TSU!
IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU REMEM-BER!?
ANYTHING AT ALL, NO MATTER HOW MINOR!
WH...WHEN AND WHERE WILL I DIE...!?
SHAKE
SHAKE
UM ...
WELL, FROM THE BAKU-MATSU, I REMEM-BER, UH... THE IKEDAYA INCI-DENT!
NGH...
!
WITH THE SHIN-SEN-GUMI...
WHAT ELSE !?
THERE WAS ALSO, UH... THE TERADAYA INCIDENT ...?
OHH! THAT TIME THEY TRIED TO KILL ME LAST YEAR!?
SERI-OUS-LY!?

OH, AND ...
... THERE WAS THE OOMIYA INCI-DENT!
IT HAD THE SAME NAME AS THE PLACE WHERE I LIVED, OOMIYA...BUT THAT'S ALL I REMEMBER...
HUH?
"OOMIYA" ...?
OR WAS IT "OUMIYA" ...?
?

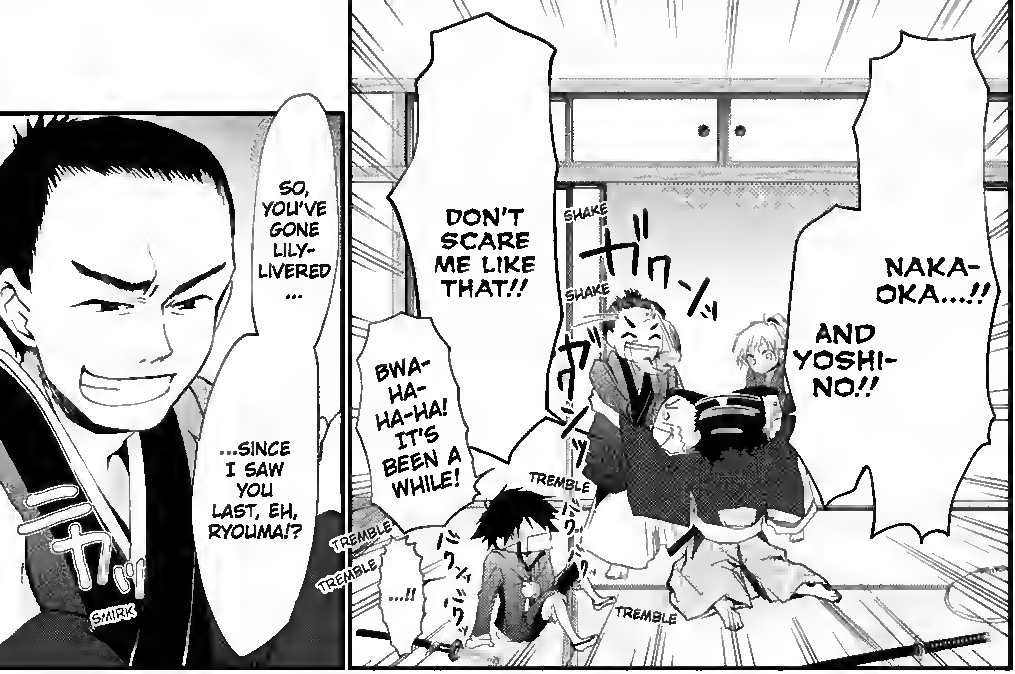
THE OU-MIYA INCI-DENT !!?

I TOLD YOU, I DUNNO! ALL I REMEMBER IS ITS NAME!
KO...
WH-WH-WH-WHEN EXACTLY WAS THIS INCIDENT!?
KO-KO-KO-KOTETSU !!
FLAIL
オロ
WHAT!?
BUT THAT'S HERE! THAT'S GOTTA BE YOUR INCIDENT, RIGHT!?
WHAT!?
THIS IS SERIOUSLY BAD, RIGHT!?
FLAIL
オロ
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
WHO'S THE ENEMY!? HOW MANY!? ANY ALLIES!!?
I DON'T KNOOOW!
I HAD NO IDEA IT WOULD BE SO DANGEROUS HERE IN THE CAPITAL...
ALLIES!
THAT'S RIGHT! I PROMISED TO MEET UP WITH MY OLD FRIEND NAKAOKA TODAY! I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN AGES!
FLINCH
DID YOU SAY... NAKAOKA ...?
!
...
CREAK

R... RYOU-MA...
I ONLY REMEMBER THIS REALLY VAGUELY, BUT...
...I THINK YOU WERE WITH SOMEBODY ON THAT DAY...
WHAT ...!?
ARE YOU SERIOUS!?
THAT NAME, NAKAOKA...I FEEL LIKE I KNOW IT FROM SOMEWHERE...
NAKA-OKA...
NAKAOKA SHINTAROU!
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
Y-YEAH, THAT WAS IT...!
I'VE DEFINITELY HEARD A NAME THAT SOUNDED LIKE THAT BEFORE!
DID HE LOOK LIKE THIS!?
FLAP
OH!
DING-DOOONG
THAT'S HIM!
THEY MENTIONED HIM ALONG WITH YOU! HE WAS DEFINITELY INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT!
... WAIT.
BUT THAT MEANS ...
NO WAY...
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK

CLUNK
THE ASSASSI-NATION OF RYOUMA SAKAMO-TO...
...IS TODAY!?

RYOUMAAA!
SLAM
WHOA!
WHAAAA!?
FLINCH
...!!


SO, YOU'VE GONE LILY-LIVERED ...
...SINCE I SAW YOU LAST, EH, RYOUMA!?
SMIRK
DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT!!
SHAKE
SHAKE
NAKA-OKA...!!
AND YOSHI-NO!!
BWA-HA-HA-HA! IT'S BEEN A WHILE!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
...!!

SAIDANI-HAN... NO, RYOUMA-HAN, THEY WANT TO ASSASSINATE YOU!
WE HEARD ALL ABOUT IT!
HUH?
F-FROM WHERE!?

CLANK
AAH...!
I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN, SO I SET UP AN ESCAPE ROUTE!
NOW THAT WE KNOW, WE'VE GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE!
GRAB
PHEW...
THEY DIDN'T HEAR WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT ...!

WE'VE GOTTA ...
...GET AWAY FROM THE CAPI-TAL!!
近みや
TRAMP
TRAMP

Scarlet
EMPIRE

OOKU-BO-SAN...
I WONDER WHY HE REALLY WANTED US TO SET OUT SO QUICKLY FROM THE CAPITAL...?
KOTE-CHAN AND THE OTHERS ...
I SURE HOPE THEY'RE ALL RIGHT...
THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR, SHIBUYA.
SAGARA-SAN...

KOTETSU HAS THE STRENGTH TO FACE DOWN TROUBLES UNDAUNTED.
I'M SURE HE'LL BRING...
...LORD SAKAMOTO AND OUR COMPANIONS BACK TO US ALIVE.

Chapter 14: The Strange Tale of the Oumiya Incident

WE HEARD ALL ABOUT IT!
RYOUMA-HAN'S LIFE IS IN DANGER!
YEAH!
WE'VE GOTTA GET AWAY FROM THE CAPITAL QUICK!
YOSHI-NO!
THE ESCAPE ROUTE YOU SET UP...?
IT'S THIS WAY!
ACROSS THE HALL!
SLIDE
THERE'S AN OLD FLIGHT OF STAIRS HIDDEN IN THE CLOSET.
IF WE PULL UP THE FLOOR...
FLINCH
YOSHI-NO, WAIT!
I KNEW IT...

IT'S THE MIMAWARIGUMI...
ANOTHER PACK OF WATCHDOGS EMPLOYED BY THE SHOGUNATE TO GUARD KYOTO, JUST LIKE THE SHINSEN-GUMI.
...!!
FIVE OR SIX OUT FRONT...
AND I HEAR NOISES FROM THE HALLWAY AS WELL...
WE MIGHT BE SURROUNDED ALREADY.
N...
NO...
BUT...
...RYOUMA-HAN, AT THIS RATE, YOU'LL...!!

RYOUMA !!
TAKE YOSHINO AND NAKAOKA-SAN AND GET OUT OF HERE!
WHA —!?
I'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE GUYS IN THE HALLWAY, SO SEIZE THAT OPENING!
SAGARA TRUSTED ME TO DO THIS! YOU THREE...I CAN'T LET ANY OF YOU DIE!
I'M NOT GONNA LET HISTORY GO UNCHANGED!

GRAHHHH, HA!
!?
DASH
KOTE-TSU!?
CRASH

HEY, WHAT'S-YOUR-FACE-GUMI!
YOU WANNA FIGHT? FIGHT ME!!
WH...
WHA...?
WHO'S THIS BRAT!?
LET'S GET HIM!
WH-WH-WH-WH-WHAT!?
DASH

!?
SLICE
HRAAAH!
RRRAAAH!
ANKSH!
WHUMP
KOTE-TSU!
CLANG

NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!
GO!!
...!!
COME ON, RUN!
GRAB
!
I WON'T LET...
DASH
...YOUR BRAVERY GO TO WASTE!
IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO AS A FELLOW MIDGET!
GRAAAH!
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
(AVERAGE LINE)
JUST SHUT UP AND RUN ALREADY!
YES!
DID THEY ALL GET AWAY?

SPANG
AAAGH!
THUMP
WHA ...!?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? I TOLD YOU TO GO WITH THEM...
RYOUMA!!

RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
DO YOU THINK...
...I COULD LEAVE YOU ALONE HERE WHILE I RUN AWAY!?
NAKA-OKA!
LOOK AFTER YOSHINO FOR ME!
LEAVE IT TO ME!
AND DON'T DIE, RYOUMA!
RYOU-MA-HAN!
KOTE-TSU...!
...!
IF YOU TWO...
...DON'T FOLLOW US QUICKLY, I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU!

RIGHT!
YOU WON'T BE WAITING LONG!
KER-CHAK
KER-CHAK
!!?
BLAM
BLAM
WHOAAA!
ROLL
ROLL
ROLL
CLATTER

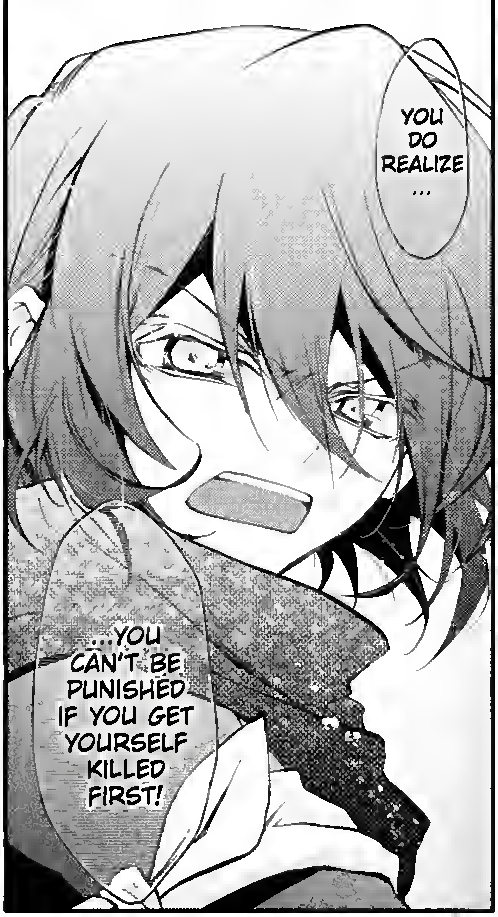
SWISH
WHOA!
NGH ...
NICE SHOT, RYOUMA!
YEAH!
CLANK
ONE KOTE ISN'T GONNA DO THE TRICK!
THESE GUYS CARRY TWO SWORDS, HUH?
CLANK
OH YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT ...
CLASH
HRAAH!
WHUMP
ARRRRRGH!

ZWISH
... FINE. IT WAS A FAIR FIGHT.
S- SPARE MY LIFE... PLEASE ...
Y— YOU WIN...!
WHAM
YOU FOOL!
SHP
I'D RATHER NOT KILL YOU IF—
SHRK

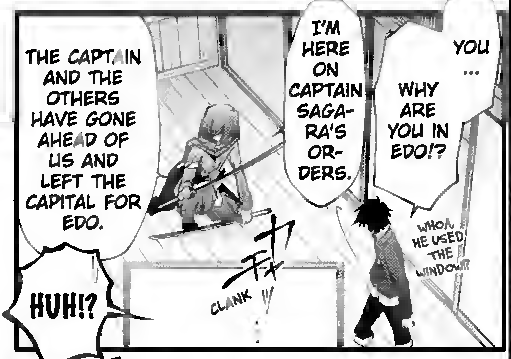
UKGH!
KO-TETSU!
LUNGE
YANK
AH-AH-AH!
DON'T SHOOT... THIS LAD'S MY SHIELD NOW!
...!
HEH...
JUST THINK, THIS BRAT NEARLY SPOILED YOUR ASSASSINATION, SAKAMOTO ...
THAT'S RIGHT, DON'T MOVE...
SWISH
CLATTER
CLATTER
I'M GONNA DIE—!
I'LL GET RID OF YOU FIRST, YOU LITTLE EYESORE!
THIS IS BAD...
I DROPPED ...MY SWORD...
WHY, YOU ...!

CRUNCH
—!!?
...
HUH?

ARRRRGH!!
WHUMP
HAGK!
KOFF!
KOFF!
FOR PITY'S SAKE...
ARE YOU HOPING FOR ANOTHER PUNISHMENT FOR DERELICTION OF DUTY?
WHAT A FOOL.
CLANK
O...

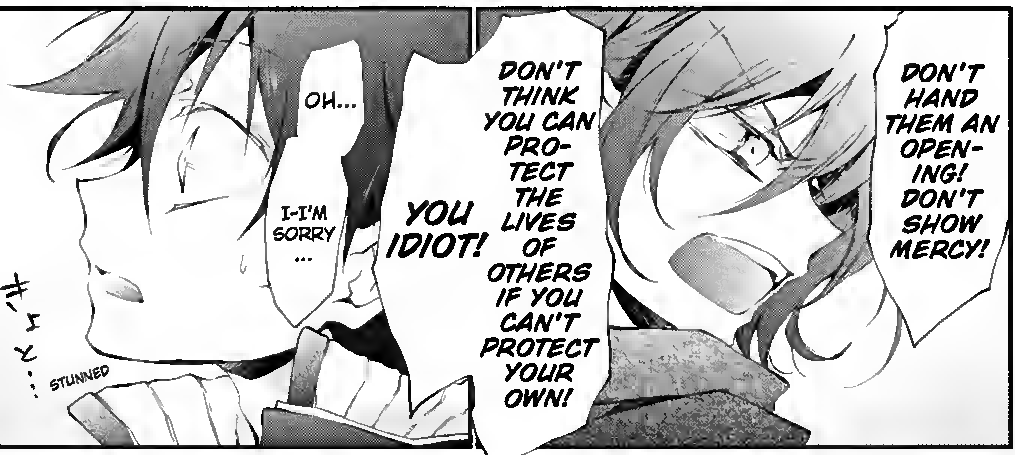

YOU DO REALIZE ...
...YOU CAN'T BE PUNISHED IF YOU GET YOURSELF KILLED FIRST!

OOKI!!
SLICE


THE CAPTAIN AND THE OTHERS HAVE GONE AHEAD OF US AND LEFT THE CAPITAL FOR EDO.
I'M HERE ON CAPTAIN SAGARA'S ORDERS.
YOU ...
WHY ARE YOU IN EDO!?
WHOA, HE USED THE WINDOW!
HUH!?
CLANK

!?
SHOVE
WAIT, WAIT, I DON'T GET WHAT YOU—

YOUR SOFT-HEARTED-NESS WILL COST YOU YOUR LIFE ON THE BATTLE-FIELD!
DO YOU WANT TO DIE?


OH...
I-I'M SORRY ...
YOU IDIOT!
DON'T THINK YOU CAN PRO-TECT THE LIVES OF OTHERS IF YOU CAN'T PROTECT YOUR OWN!
DON'T HAND THEM AN OPEN-ING! DON'T SHOW MERCY!
STUNNED

WE CAN TALK LATER.
CREAK

I WON'T BE ABLE TO SHOW MY FACE TO THE CAPTAIN IF I LET YOU DIE, THAT'S ALL.

THANKS FOR WORRY-ING ABOUT ME.
CLANK

DASH
HUH!?
HUH?
YOU STAY NEAR LORD SAKAMOTO AND PROTECT HIM.
CLANK
OOKI!
YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM ALONE—
SLASH
SLICE
WAARGH!
SLASH
DASH
ZLASH
...GUESS HE'S...
...FINE ALONE...?
I...
AARGH!
THUD
THUD
THUD
EEEK!
WHUMP

RYOU-MA! ARE YOU OKAY!?
NEVER MIND ME! YOU WERE IN REAL DANGER JUST NOW!
DASH
SPLURT
SLAM
KOUSUKE!
GRAB
CLATTER
SLASH
WAIT-
KER-THUMP
HEY... WAS OOKI... ALWAYS THAT STRONG...?
NOW YOU'RE ASKING THAT!?
SHIROU OOKI IS KNOWN AS THE MOST SKILLED WARRIOR IN THE SATSUMA ROSHI BAND!
HE'S A GENIUS WITH A BLADE, RECOGNIZED BY SAGARA HIMSELF!
YOU ...
STAGGER
LET ME!
YOU CAN'T HANDLE HIM!
OOKI!
*FROM VOL. 1, CH. 4
I DIDN'T KNOW...
SO THAT'S WHY HE GOT SO MAD...!!

CLATTER
DIVE
RYOUMA!
GET BEHIND ME—
GAH!
THEY'RE CLIMBING INSIDE!
!?
.....
RRRAAAH!
KER-CHAK
PUFF
PUFF
KER-CHAK
THUMP
CLACK
I'VE GOT THIS COVERED!
I'LL—
KER-CHAK
PUFF

OUT OF BULLETS !!?
SHIIING
TCH!
SCRAAPE
!!!
SPATTER
SPATTER
DASH
RYOU-MA! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?
YEAH ...
HE JUST GRAZED ME A BIT!
TCH... THAT IDIOT...
CLATTER

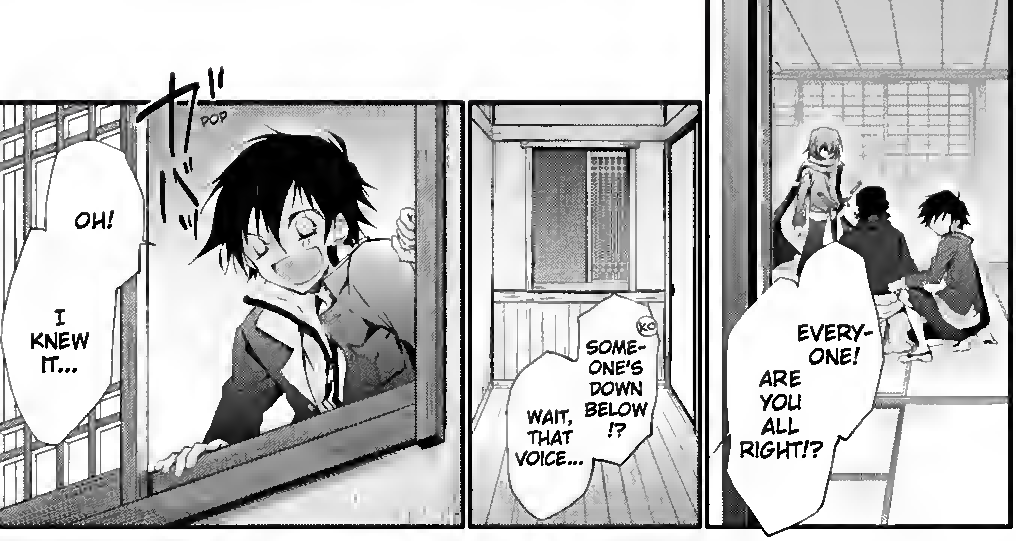
I TOOK CARE OF THEM!
WHAT ABOUT THE GUYS IN THE HALL!?
OOK!
SHOVE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
WRITING ME OFF ALREADY!? I ONLY RAN OUT OF BULLETS!
RY
RYOUMA'S USELESS AT THIS POINT!
IN THAT CASE, RYOUMA ...!
I'LL NEVER MAKE IT IF I START WITH THE NEAREST ENEMY!
CLANK
CREAK
!!
FRESH FIGHTERS AT THE WINDOW...!

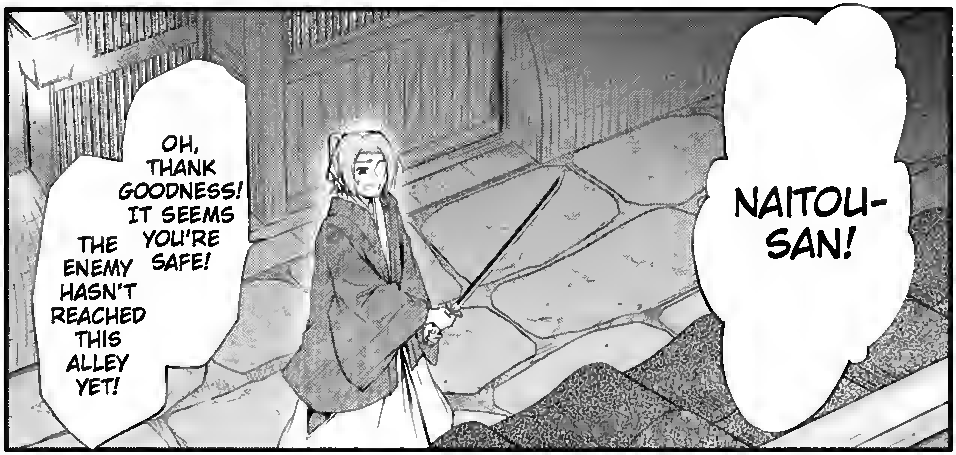
THIS ONE'S ALL YOURS!
KOTE-TSU!
HRAAAH!
...!
RIGHT!
GRIN
SHING
SLASH

WHUMP

WHUMP

I...
... SAVED ME...?
... BOTH ...
YOU ...
YOUR WOUND JUST NOW... DON'T TELL ME—
RYOU-MA!!
WHUMP
...OWE YOU MY LIFE...!!


POP
OH!
I KNEW IT...
WAIT, THAT VOICE...
SOME-ONE'S DOWN BELOW!?
EVERY-ONE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?


NAITOU-SAN!
OH, THANK GOODNESS! IT SEEMS YOU'RE SAFE! THE ENEMY HASN'T REACHED THIS ALLEY YET!

TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP

THE MIMAWA-RIGUMI OUT FRONT SEEM TO BE TAKEN CARE OF AS WELL!
LET'S GO, QUICKLY BEFORE THEY CAN PURSUE US!
YEAH! WE'LL BE RIGHT DOWN!
HEY, HOW DID OOKI GET UP HERE JUST NOW ANY-WAY?
NEVER MIND THAT! HURRY!

I...
I HAVE TO GO BACK AFTER ALL!
TRAMP
TRAMP
...
WHAT'S WRONG?
YOSHINO !?
PAUSE
BUT RYOUMA AND THAT LAD...
THAT'S NOT WHAT THEY WANTED!
I'M A NOBODY WITH NO HOME TO RETURN TO... YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT ME BEHIND AS A DECOY!
YES, BUT I'M WORRIED...
BUT YOU MUSTN'T! RYOUMA WILL BE FINE! HE'S THE TOUGHEST FELLOW IN ALL JAPAN!
I CAN'T STAND SIMPLY WAITING AND HOPING LIKE THIS!
YES, BUT I...!

I WANTED TO BE OF USE TO RYOUMA-HAN, AND YET...
IF...
...SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED TO THE TWO OF THEM, WHAT WILL I DO!?
VERY WELL...
FROWN
I'LL GO AND SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THEM!
YOSHINO, YOU WAIT HERE FOR ME!
I'LL RETURN SOON!
WHAT!?
TH-THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT ME!
OH, BUT NAKAOKA-HAN...
I COULDN'T VERY WELL BRING A LADY INTO DANGER NOW, COULD I?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT... BE-HIND YOU...
HUH?
WHAM

HULLO, NAKA-OKA!
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL!
GA HA HA HA!
WAUGH!
IT'S...
IT'S THE GHOST OF RYOU-MA!
HEY NOW, DON'T JUST KILL ME OFF!
AH HA HA HA!

TRAMP
TRAMP
HA!
WE CAUGHT UP!
KOTETSU!!

AHH!
FLOP
RYOUMA-HAN!
I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE SAFE!

N-NOW, NOW, DON'T CRY...
I...
I'M NOT CRYING!
BY THE WAY, WHO ARE THESE TWO?

SNIFF
I...
I'M SO GLAD... TRULY I AM...

OH!
THAT'S OOKI AND NAITOU-SAN!
BEAM
THEY'RE MY FRIENDS!
OH!
SO HE'S THAT OOKI-KUN?
NICE TO MEET YOU...
WHY, YOU...
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TELLING HER?
"THAT" OOKI-KUN...?
CLANK
TRULY, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU'RE ALL SAFE!
CLAP
OH, BUT IT'S THANKS TO ALL OF YOU THAT I WAS RESCUED!
KOTETSU SEEMS TO BE LOOKING A BIT BETTER AS WELL...
GLANCE
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME!?
GRIN
KOTETSU.
AND OOKI AS WELL...
THE TWO OF YOU SAVED MY LIFE.

YOU ARE MY HEROES!
"HEROES" ...?
HUH...?
I...
I-I-I-GOT CALLED A HERO BY THE HERO OF JAPAN—!
FLAIL
FLAIL
AH HA HA HA!
DID YOU HEAR THAT!? A CENTURY AND A HALF FROM NOW, I'LL BE THE "HERO OF JAPAN"!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, RYOUMA?
SLAP
SLAP
THAT HURTS,

OH! BESIDES THAT, NAKA-OKA...
LOOK AT THIS! THIS PHOTO OF YOU OGLING SOME LADY IS GOING TO BE IN A TEXTBOOK SOMEDAY!
HUH!?
I TOLD YOU, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...
PERHAPS I SHOULD GET RID OF THE PART WITH THE GIRL IN, TO SPARE YOU THE SHAME!
HEY!
STOP THAT! GIVE IT BACK, PLEASE!

WE REALLY AVOIDED THE OUMIYA INCIDENT!
NOW THEN, EVERY-ONE.
IT ISN'T SAFE HERE EITHER. WE'D BEST HURRY ON.
TRAMP
HA-HA-HA! KEEP-AWAY, KEEP-AWAY!
WE...
RYOUMA IS ALIVE...

TRAMP
THAT MEANS THE ASSASSINATION OF RYOUMA WILL VANISH FROM HISTO...RY...

KOTE-TSU?
FLINCH
...HAS CHANGED?
HISTORY...
...WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?
SO...

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN...
...TO THE FUTURE I CAME FROM!?

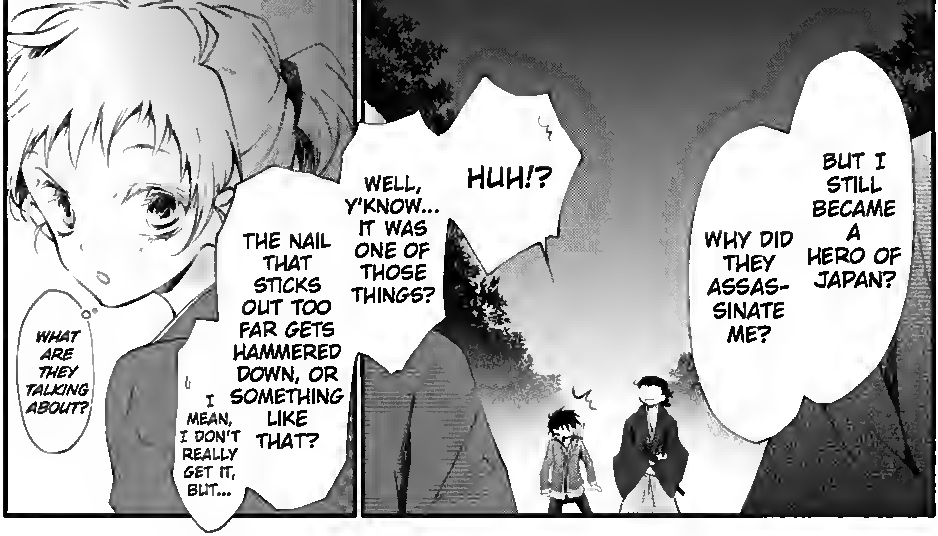
Scarlet
EMPIRE

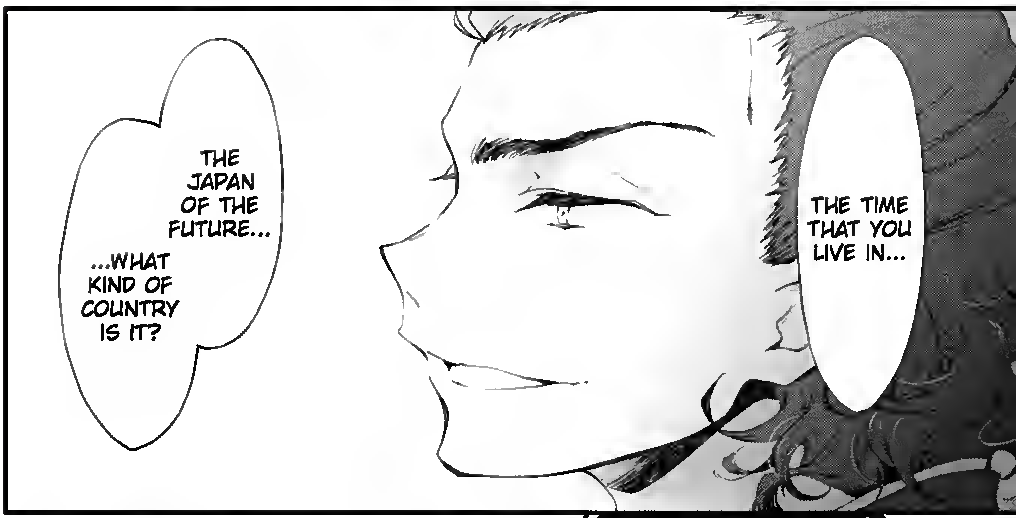
NAITOU-SAN GUARDING THE BACK ALLEY.
MEOW.
FLINCH
ビクッ
ｶｷｰﾝ!

...
RYOUMA SAKA-MOTO...
...IS STILL ALIVE...
SMIRK
RUSTLE

Chapter 15: A Hero's Resolve

RUSTLE
SAY, KOTETSU.
I...
...DIED FROM AN ASSASSINATION IN THE HISTORY YOU KNOW, DIDN'T I?
Y... YEAH ...
IN THE INCIDENT AT THE OUMIYA JUST NOW.
YEAH. WELL, AS FAR AS I KNOW.


BUT I STILL BECAME A HERO OF JAPAN?
WHY DID THEY ASSAS-SINATE ME?
HUH!?
WELL, Y'KNOW... IT WAS ONE OF THOSE THINGS?
THE NAIL THAT STICKS OUT TOO FAR GETS HAMMERED DOWN, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
I MEAN, I DON'T REALLY GET IT, BUT...
WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?


THE TIME THAT YOU LIVE IN...
THE JAPAN OF THE FUTURE...
...WHAT KIND OF COUNTRY IS IT?

IT'S PEACE-FUL.
JAPAN HASN'T BEEN TO WAR IN A LONG TIME.
I HEARD THE LAST WAR ENDED WHEN MY GREAT-GRANDDAD WAS A KID.

...THE FUTURE WHERE RYOUMA SAKAMOTO WAS ASSASSINATED IN THE PAST.
BUT THAT'S...
WOW...
YOU CAN VISIT ANY OTHER COUNTRY WHENEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT!
THERE ARE LOTS OF FOREIGNERS LIVING IN JAPAN AND JAPANESE PEOPLE LIVING OVERSEAS TOO!
AND WE TRADE AND STUFF WITH LOTS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.
WE GET ALONG PRETTY WELL WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD!
WHEN I SAVED RYOUMA, IT CHANGED HISTORY... AND THE PAST.
WHAT IF THE FUTURE—
AH...
SO THAT'S WHAT IT WAS...
HUH?
WHEN WE FIRST MET... DIDN'T I COMPLIMENT YOU?
OH.
YEAH...
"HMM, HOW SHOULD I SAY THIS... IT'S A FINE THING!"
SO THAT'S THE FUTURE...
...THAT AWAITS US, EH?

NOW I FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS...
...THAT I SENSED IN YOU BACK THEN.

...?

THE ROAD IS ROUGH BUT BETTER FOR GIVING OUR PURSUERS THE SLIP, I BELIEVE.
LET'S TRAVEL ALONG THE NAKASENDO THIS TIME.

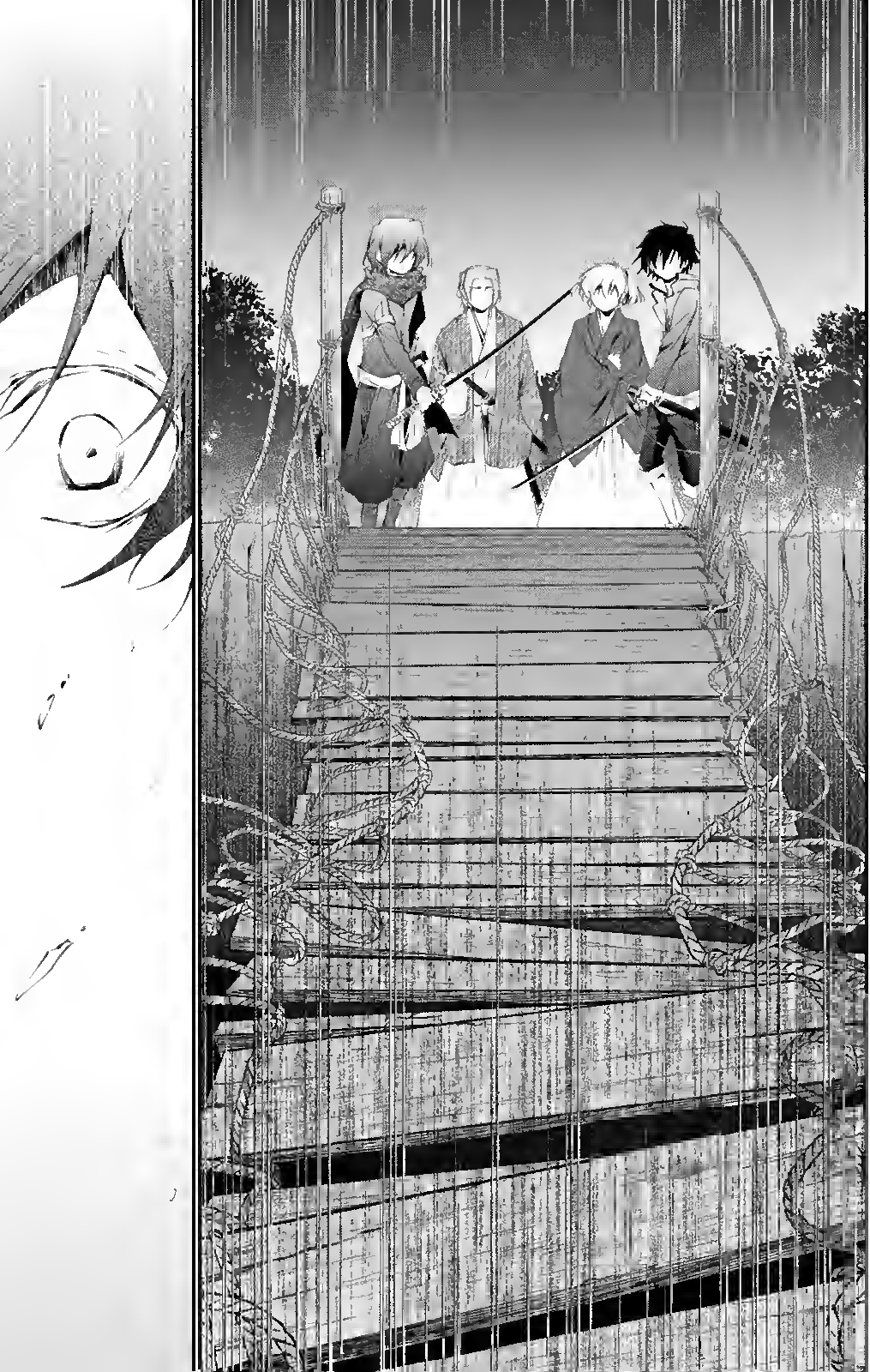
EVERY-ONE.
BEYOND THAT BRIDGE, THE ROAD SPLITS INTO THE TOKAIDO AND THE NAKASENDO.

!!?
OH NO!
EVERY-ONE, CROSS QUICKLY!
IT'S A BIT OLD, SO PLEASE WATCH YOUR STEP...
CREAK
—!!
IT'S...
...THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF THE MIMAWA-RIGUMI!?
LORD NAKA-OKA!?
NAITOU-SAN! TAKE YOSHINO AND GO!
LAST TIME I RAN AHEAD AND FLED!
NOW IT'S MY TURN TO STAND FIRM!
KSHING

HRAAAH!
DASH
!!!
NAKA-OKA-SAN!
IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT, LEAVING IT ALL UP TO NAKAOKA!
ARE YOU GONNA GO TOO!?
THOSE ARE OUT OF AMMO, AREN'T THEY!?
KCHAK
I LOADED MY LAST RESERVE OF THREE BULLETS!
KO-TETSU! OOKI!
YOU GO AHEAD ACROSS THE BRIDGE! DRAW YOUR BLADES AND WAIT FOR ME!
HUH!? OUR BLADES ...?
WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE YOU HERE—
I'LL FOLLOW AS SOON AS I'VE FIRED OFF MY LAST THREE ROUNDS TO SCARE THEM!
WHEN THE ENEMY RETREATS, I'LL SEIZE THE OPENING AND BRING NAKAOKA BACK AT FULL SPEED! THE MOMENT WE'RE ACROSS THE BRIDGE, YOU TWO BRING IT DOWN!
—!!

IF SOMETHING DOES HAPPEN, SWEAR YOU WON'T LET YOSHINO RETURN!
OKAY... GOT IT!
DON'T YOU KNOW WE HAVEN'T GOT TIME TO DITHER!?
MY GUNS ARE WELL SUITED FOR SCARE TACTICS!
THE KEY IS TO GET AS FAR FROM THE ENEMY AS WE CAN!
LET'S GO!
DASH
!?
UM... WHERE'S RYOUMA-HAN—
EEK!
GRAB
OOKI-KUN!
KOTE-TSU!
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK

THEY'LL BE HERE SOON... DON'T WORRY...
HUFF...
HUFF...
B...
BUT...
WHOOSH
NEVER MIND HIM, JUST RUN!!
HUH !?
GUN-SHOTS !?
ANY MINUTE NOW...
BLAM
BLAM
ALL RIGHT.
NOW THEY'LL CROSS —
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
WE'RE GONNA DROP THE BRIDGE WHEN RYOUMA AND NAKAOKA-SAN GET HERE!
YOSHI-NO!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, SO STAND BACK!



HUH?
THE BRIDGE ...!!!
CRAAASH
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
WHAT'S ...!?
DAMMIT!
THERE'S TOO MUCH DUST, I CAN'T SEE...! WHAT HAP-PENED!?
DID SOMEONE DROP IT FROM THE OTHER SIDE!?
BUT WHY!?
IT CAN'T BE... THEY'RE STILL ON THE OTHER SIDE!
RYOUMA, CAN YOU HEAR ME!? WHAT HAPPENED OVER THERE!?
ANSWER ME!
HEY!!

I NEEDED TO PART WAYS WITH THE OTHERS...
SORRY, NAKAOKA.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET MIXED UP IN THIS EITHER...
SO BE SURE AND GET OUT OF HERE TOO!
ARRRGH!
!!?
RYOUMA !?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...?
DASH

WHAT!?
WHLIMP
WH...
WHO'S THAT!?
HE'S CLEARLY NOT AN ALLY, SO...
...WHY IS HE MURDERING THE MIMAWA-RIGUMI!?
TRAMP
TRAMP
HE MUST BE AFTER ME...!
TRAMP

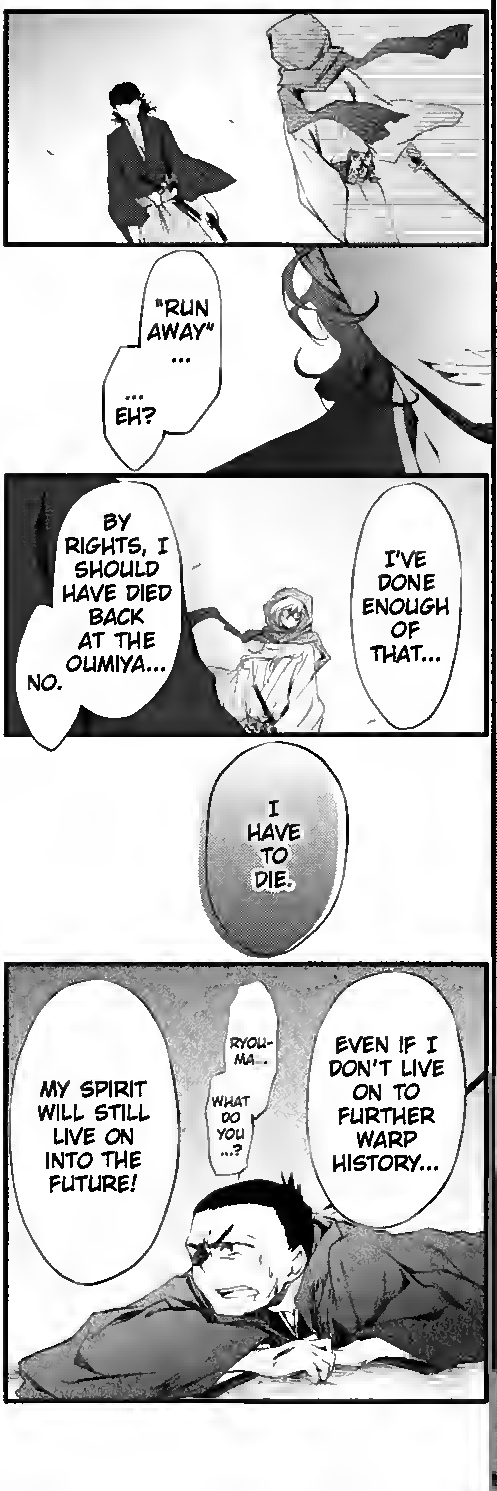
LOOM
SHIKYOU KAWASE ...
...I PRE-SUME?

KAWASE ...!?
GASP
YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
HE'S ONLY AFTER ME!
DON'T TALK ROT!
RYOUMA ...
YOU'VE NO BULLETS LEFT, DO YOU?
NAKA-OKA!?
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE!?
HRAAAH!
CLANG
DASH
YOU REALLY THINK ...
...I COULD LEAVE YOU HERE AND FLEE!?

NO...!
WHACK
...CHANCE.....
RYOUMA! FIRE!! NOW'S YOUR...
SLASH

DON'T MOVE.
SWING
WHUMP
NAKA-OKA!!
DROP YOUR GUNS.

IT'S NO GOOD.
RYOUMA...
BADUM
AT THIS RATE...
AT THIS RATE, HE REALLY WILL—
RUN AWAY!
YOU CAN'T FIGHT HIM!


"RUN AWAY" ...
... EH?
BY RIGHTS, I SHOULD HAVE DIED BACK AT THE OUMIYA...
NO.
I'VE DONE ENOUGH OF THAT...
I HAVE TO DIE.
MY SPIRIT WILL STILL LIVE ON INTO THE FUTURE!
RYOU-MA...
WHAT DO YOU ...?
EVEN IF I DON'T LIVE ON TO FURTHER WARP HISTORY...
RYOUMA!!!

AS LONG AS I KNOW ABOUT THAT FUTURE...
...IT WON'T BE SO BAD, DYING HERE!
CLATTER
RYOUMA !?
AN ENEMY WHO WON'T FIGHT BACK IS TIRE-SOME, BUT...
AH WELL.

I BEAR NO GRUDGE AGAINST YOU, BUT YOU MUST DIE.
RYOUMA SAKAMOTO.
RYOUMA!!
GET OUT OF THERE!!
RYOUMA-HAN!
...CURSE ANYONE FOR THIS, LET IT NOT BE ME...
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
AND IF YOU...
TRAMP
DAMN YOU.
S-STOP...
KCHAK

CURSE SOUZOU SAGARA, AND DIE!!
NOOO!!

CLANG
!!?

I...
I'M SORRY...
I'M AFRAID ...
AH HA HA...
I'D MADE UP MY MIND...TO GO OUT LOOKING HEROIC, BUT...
I DON'T WANT TO DIE...!

KOTE-TSU!!
I...
LISTEN...! I'M AFRAID TO DIE!
I LOVED BEING ALIVE!
I'M SO GLAD...
...I LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO MEET YOU!
WHEN WE FIRST MET...
...YOU SEEMED RADIANT TO ME!

YOU LIVED IN THE IDEAL NEW ERA I ALWAYS PICTURED...
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU YOURSELF ARE THE EMBODIMENT OF MY HOPES!
THAT'S WHY YOU SEEMED TO SHINE!
KOTE-TSU!
THIS IS MY LAST REQUEST!
YOU MUSTN'T HATE YOUR ENEMIES!
EVEN KAWASE!
EVERYONE ALWAYS HAS REASONS FOR WHATEVER THEY DO...!

SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HURT...
...OR LIED TO, BUT THEY KEEP ON LIVING IN THE CRUEL REALITY OF THIS WORLD!
CLENCH
NOT EVERYONE CAN LIVE A SIMPLE, HONEST LIFE THE WAY YOU DO!
WHAT DO...
...YOU KNOW ...?
CLANG
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE...
...HAVE NO RIGHT TO SPEAK SO!!

WHUMP
RYOU-MA!!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, LAST RE-QUEST!?
YOU CAN'T GIVE UP NOW!
YOU DON'T WANNA DIE, DO YOU!?
STAND UP! PICK UP YOUR SWORD!!
ZSH
ZSH
SLAM
DAMMIT!!

...MY COMING HERE WON'T HAVE MEANT A THING...!
IF YOU DIE...
DOESN'T THAT MEAN I'M SUPPOSED TO HELP YOU!?
I GOT FLUNG ALL THE WAY INTO THIS ERA JUST TO MEET YOU!!
...HISTORY CAN BE CHANGED, THEN WE HAVE TO TRY TO CHANGE IT, RIGHT!?
IF...

LIVE ON...
KOTE-TSU.
AFTER ALL...

...I'M THE GREAT HERO, RYOUMA SAKA-MOTO... AND YOU'RE MY HERO!

...AFTER YOUR BELOVED COMRADE HAS GONE AHEAD ...
THE PAIN OF LIVING ON ALONE ...

RYOUMAAAA!!
SA-
GARA.
NOW
YOU TOO
WILL
TASTE
THAT
BITTER-
NESS.

SA-
GARA.
NOW
YOU TOO
WILL
TASTE
THAT
BITTER-
NESS.

RYOUMAAA!!

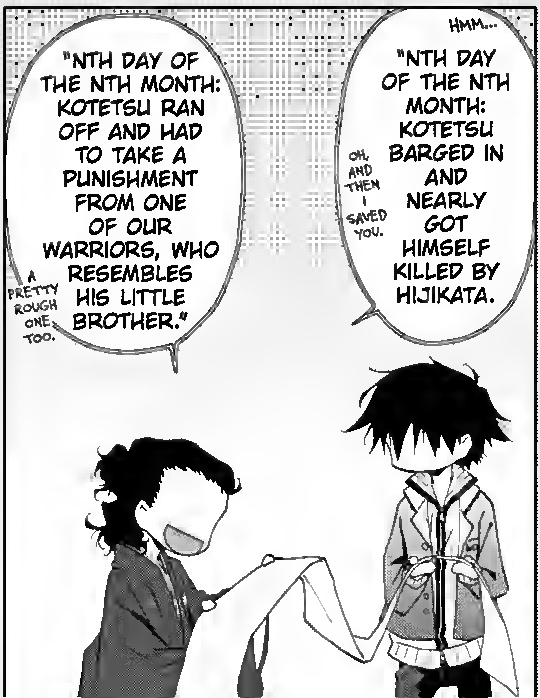
Scarlet
EMPIRE

SO THAT'S HOW IT GOES...
ALL RIGHT!
RYOU-MAAA!
SLAM
FOOD'S READY—
...WHAT ARE YOU WRITING?

A MES-SAGE ...
YOU MEAN A LETTER !?

OH, KOTETSU!
I WAS JUST WRITING A MESSAGE TO MY SISTER!
SCOOT
SCOOT
SCOOT

CRINKLE
ん…
FLOP
THAT THING!? IT'S CRAZY LONG!

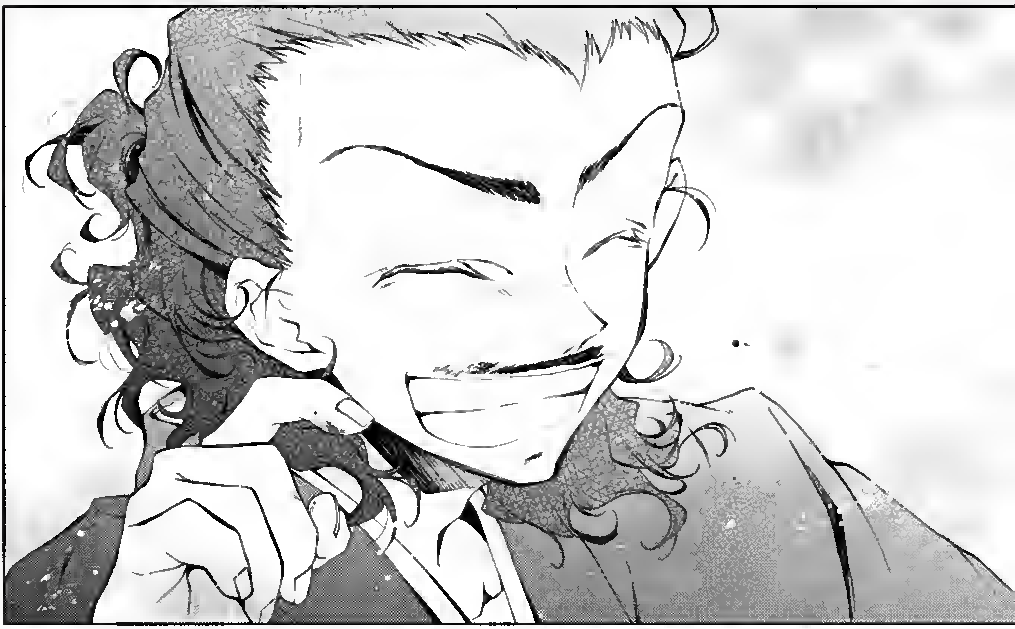

"NTH DAY OF THE NTH MONTH: KOTETSU RAN OFF AND HAD TO TAKE A PUNISHMENT FROM ONE OF OUR WARRIORS, WHO RESEMBLES HIS LITTLE BROTHER."
A PRETTY ROUGH ONE TOO.
HMM...
"NTH DAY OF THE NTH MONTH: KOTETSU BARGED IN AND NEARLY GOT HIMSELF KILLED BY HIJIKATA.
OH, AND THEN I SAVED YOU.

OLD-FASHIONED HANDWRITING IS TOUGH TO READ.
IT'S MORE LIKE A SCROLL ...
HUH?
RUSTLE

MY NAME ...?
kokkyu
kokkyu
WHAT'S WRITTEN HERE?

HALF OF THAT WAS YOUR FAULT ANYWAY!!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOUR SISTER THAT STUFF, DO YOU!?
BWA HA HA HA HA!
CRUNCH
WHAT IS THIS, A BURN BOOK OF MY SCREW-UPS!?
RYOU-MA...
THAT'S CALLED A "SIBLING COMPLEX," YOU KNOW...
HAS ONE TOO.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW MANY HUNDREDS OF THESE I'VE WRITTEN!
MY SISTER'S NEVER AT EASE UNLESS I KEEP HER UP TO DATE ON THE DETAILS OF ALL MY EVERYDAY DOINGS.
FLAP
HOW'S THIS, KOTETSU?
Your sibling complex, Ryouma
ALL RIGHT...
SCRATCH SCRATCH SCRATCH
OH-HO!
KOTETSU, YOU KNOW SO MANY WORDS THAT EVEN I DON'T!

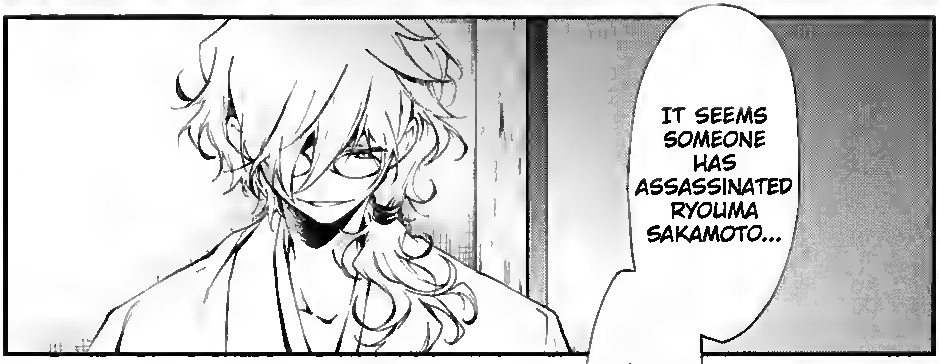
YEAAAH, HE DEFINITELY DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS...
I'M NOT TELLING HIM...
GREAT ...
LOOKS GOOD TO ME.
HEH-HEH!
YOU LEARN SOME-THING NEW EVERY DAY!
GA HA HA!
MY SISTER WILL BE SO PLEASED!



"KOTETSU!"

PAUSE

Chapter 16: Forced to Inherit His Vision

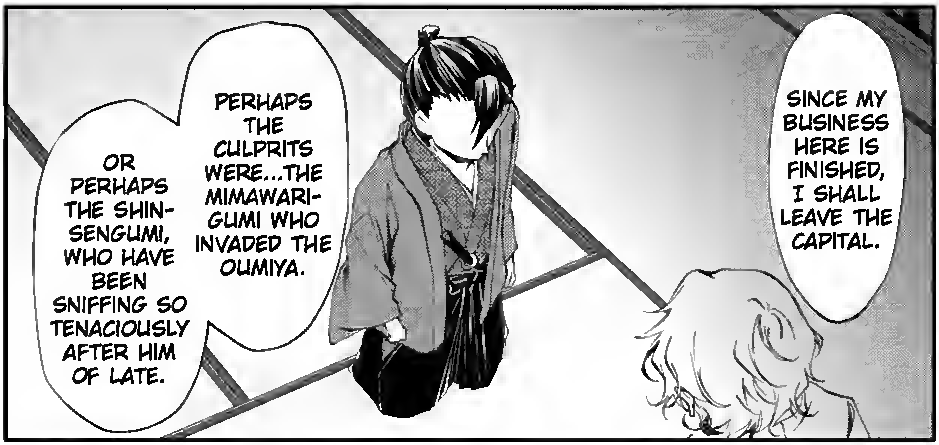

IT SEEMS SOMEONE HAS ASSASSINATED RYOUMA SAKAMOTO...
...LORD OOKUBO.

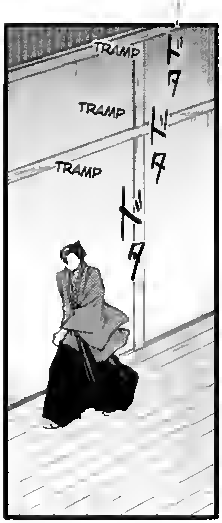
CLATTER
—!!

YOU ARE INDEED A GREAT ASSET TO—
SWISH
!?

S-SIR TAKEDA!
CAN IT BE TRUE ...!?

I DID NOTHING MORE THAN COME TO TELL YOU...
...THAT SOMEONE HAS ASSAS-SINATED HIM.


SINCE MY BUSINESS HERE IS FINISHED, I SHALL LEAVE THE CAPITAL.
PERHAPS THE CULPRITS WERE...THE MIMAWARI-GUMI WHO INVADED THE OUMIYA.
OR PERHAPS THE SHIN-SENGUMI, WHO HAVE BEEN SNIFFING SO TENACIOUSLY AFTER HIM OF LATE.


TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP

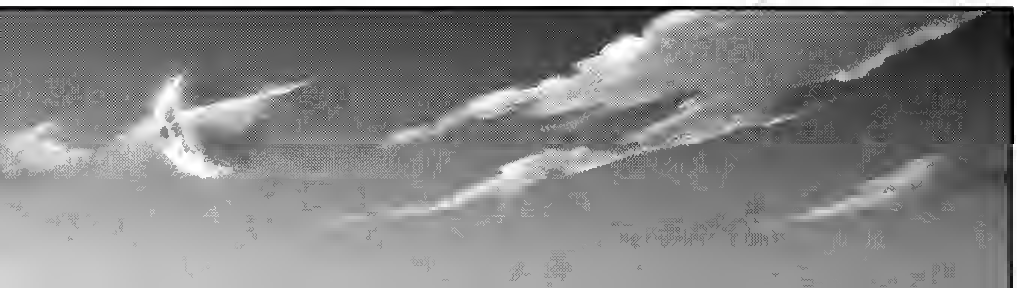
SMIRK

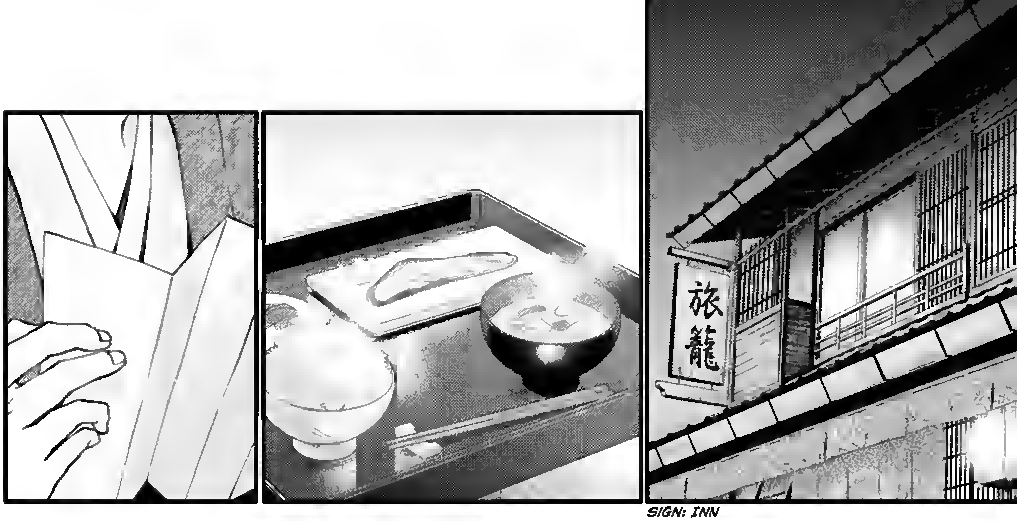
SLIDE
I DO HOPE THINGS GO WELL FOR YOU.

SAI-GOU!
SLAM
THAT MAN IS...
RYOUMA SAKA-MOTO IS DEAD!!
WHAT !!?
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
IS...
...IS THAT TRUE ...!?
WHERE DID YOU GET SUCH TIDINGS—
GRAB
IT SEEMS NO ONE SAW THE CULPRITS...
WE KNOW NOT WHOSE DOING IT WAS... THE MIMAWA-RIGUMI OR THE SHIN-SENGUMI! IF RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE, WE MAY EVEN BE BLAMED...!
THE CULPRITS ...?
OOKUBO, YOU CAN'T MEAN—
SAI-GOU !!

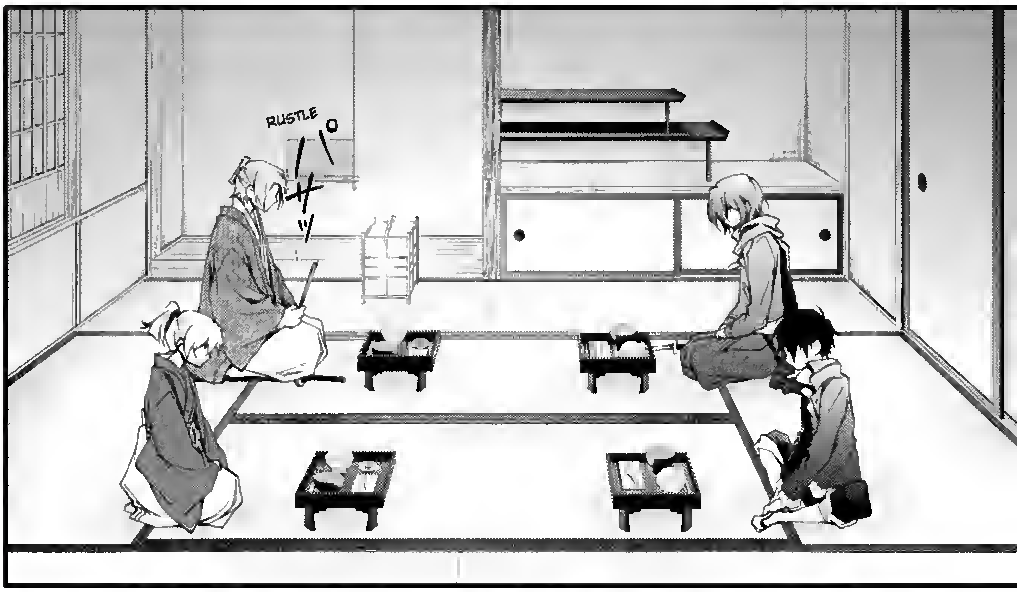
THIS MEANS WAR AT LAST!
THE TIMES ARE ON OUR SIDE!
HIS-TORY IS TAKING SHAPE AS WE SPEAK!
NO...
WE OUR-SELVES ARE SHAPING IT!
SAI-GOU!!

WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES.





SIGN: INN



WHAT...
...AM I DOING...
...
HERE?

I COULDN'T PROTECT RYOUMA ...
...AND I BROKE MY PROMISE TO SAGARA.

I REALLY ...
... COULDN'T DO ANY-THING. NOT ONE LITTLE THING...

YOU'VE DONE NOTHING BUT MOPE ABOUT...
OH, GIVE IT A REST...
YOU CALL YOURSELF A MAN?
Y...
YOSHINO-SAN...
YOU DON'T ...
...GET IT...
GRIP
I REALLY THOUGHT ...
...I COULD HELP HIM.

WHEN WE GOT THROUGH THE OUMIYA INCIDENT...
...I SAVED HIM AT LEAST ONCE.
I THOUGHT, JUST MAYBE...
...SINCE I CAME FROM THE FUTURE...
...IF I REALLY TRIED...
BUT IN THE END—
I THOUGHT I...
IT WAS POINT-LESS! FROM THE VERY BEGIN-NING...
...I WAS JUST BEING PRIDE-FUL!
...COULD CHANGE HISTORY SOMEHOW...

STAND
スクッ
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, HUH!?
HOW CAN YOU SIT THERE, LOOKING SO CALM—
STOMP
ダン
SLAP
パチン

HUH ...?
WHUMP
OF COURSE I'M NOT CALM, YOU FOOL!
I...I DID NOTHING BUT NEED PROTECTION FROM START TO FINISH!
I WAS NO HELP AT ALL! DO YOU REALIZE HOW THAT HURTS!?
BUT STILL...
SIMPLY CRYING ABOUT IT WON'T CHANGE A THING!
I KNOW FOR CERTAIN...
...TO SEE US SITTING HERE CRYING WOULD ONLY DISPLEASE HIM...!
SO...
...SHOULDN'T WE ALL DO WHATEVER WE CAN!?

WHAT-EVER...
...WE CAN...?
THAT'S RIGHT!

KOTE-TSU.
THAT MAN WHO ATTACKED RYOUMA-HAN...
SHIKYOU KAWASE...
WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH IT.
YOU CAN'T MEAN —!!
NO, YOU MUSTN'T SEEK REVENGE—
I'M WELL AWARE!

THAT'S WHAT RYOUMA-HAN SAID.
"YOU MUSTN'T HATE YOUR ENEMIES. EVERYONE HAS THEIR REASONS."
THE MORE I HATE THAT MAN...
...THE LESS I'LL TRULY KNOW HIM.

SO, KOTETSU, TELL ME...
...ABOUT SHIKYOU KAWASE.
WHY DID RYOUMA-HAN HAVE TO DIE BY HIS HAND...?
TELL HER ABOUT HIM...?
I THINK...
...HE WAS AFTER RYOUMA BECAUSE HE'S IN A SHOGUNATE ORGANIZATION...
BUT HE LEFT THAT ORGANIZATION BEHIND AND FOLLOWED US TO THE CAPITAL.
IT LOOKS LIKE HE HAS A GRUDGE AGAINST SAGARA THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SHOGUNATE.

THEN THAT'S WHERE WE MUST START.

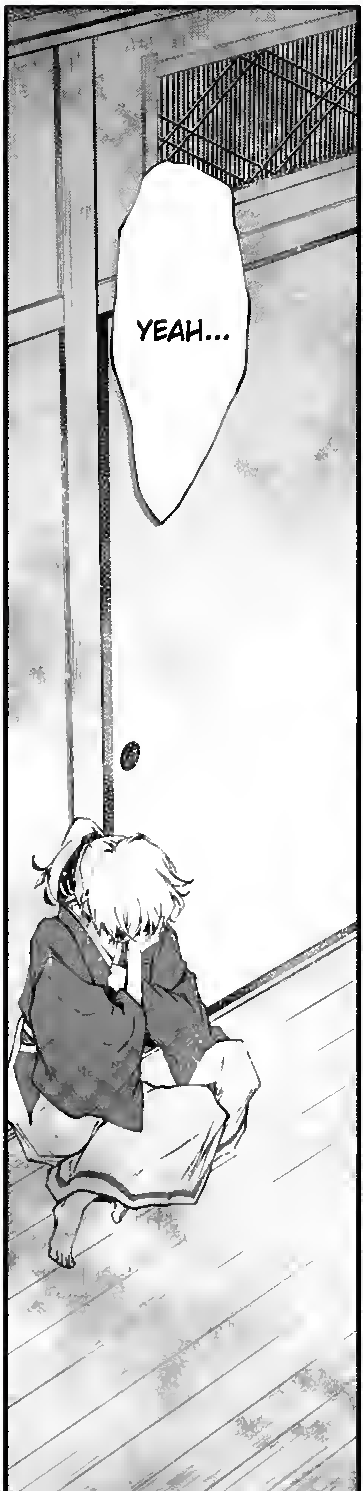
YEAH...
BUT—
NO BUTS!
IF WE JUST LET SHIKYOU GO, THERE ARE SURE TO BE OTHER VICTIMS!
MANY MORE PRECIOUS LIVES WILL BE LOST, JUST LIKE HIS...!
RYOUMA-HAN WOULD DO THE SAME, I'M SURE OF IT.
HE WAS THE SORT OF GOOD MAN WHO WOULD REACH OUT TO HELP...
...AN UN-KNOWN, RUN-AWAY COURTE-SAN...
ONCE WE'VE CON-FRONT-ED THEM...
...WE CAN STOP SHIKYOU KAWASE!

HE BELIEVED IN OTHERS, NO MATTER WHAT THEY WERE LIKE...
...AND NEVER GAVE UP ON THEM...
"NEVER LOSE THAT FIERY NATURE YOU SHOWED JUST NOW!"
"IS IT REALLY YOUR 'DUTY' TO SAVE HIM?"
"THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO BE SINCERE!"
IF WE... DO THAT...
IT WOULD MAKE...
...RYOUMA HAPPY TOO, HUH?

STAND
スクッ…
I'M SORRY... PLEASE... I NEED TO BE ALONE...
YES...
SHUFFLE
スタ
SHUFFLE
スタ
SHUFFLE
スタ
THUMP
ストン
WHATEVER ELSE HAPPENS ...
...STAY STRONG AND DON'T CRY.
YOU'RE ...
...RYOUMA SAKAMOTO'S HERO, AFTER ALL.

CLACK
カチャッ

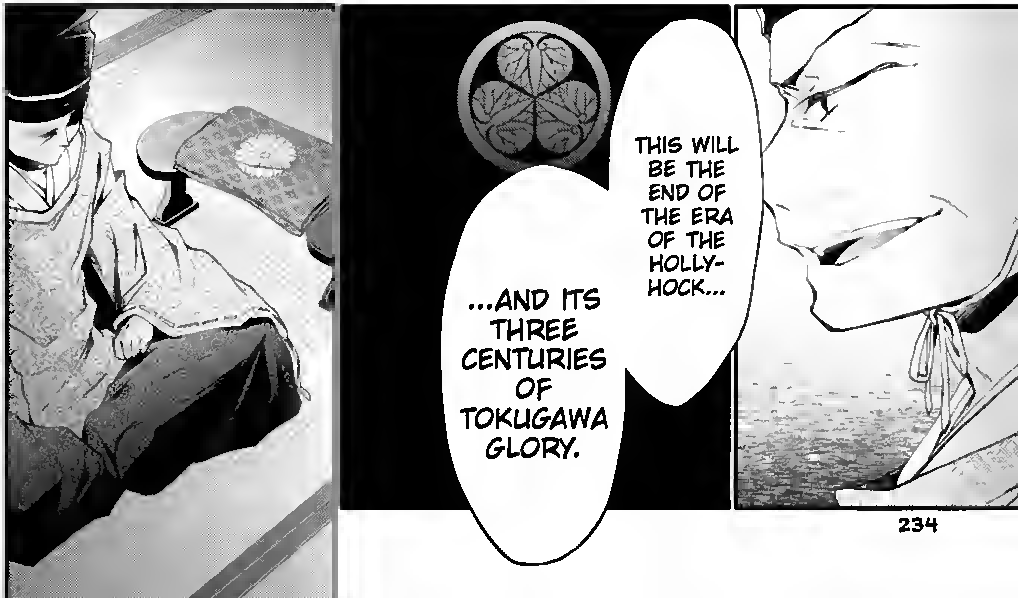
EAT.
WE RISE EARLY TOMOR-ROW.
CLACK
CLACK
CLENCH
GULP
GULP
DRIP
DRIP
Y-YEAH...


YEAH...

I SEE.
SO, SAKA-MOTO IS...
RUSTLE
YOU'VE MADE QUITE A CLEVER MOVE, HAVEN'T YOU?

NOW, TO RESTORE IMPERIAL RULE...
...WE'LL DECLARE THAT THE RIGHT TO RULE BELONGS TO THE IMPERIAL COURT!
WE WON'T ALLOW THE TOKUGAWA CLAN TO CONTINUE TO DO AS THEY PLEASE!

SAIGOU HAS FINALLY GIVEN US THE NOD AS WELL.
WE CAN TAKE ACTION EVEN IN EDO.
SOON, WE'LL HAVE A JUST CAUSE TO GO TO WAR.
THAT WILL DO VERY NICELY.

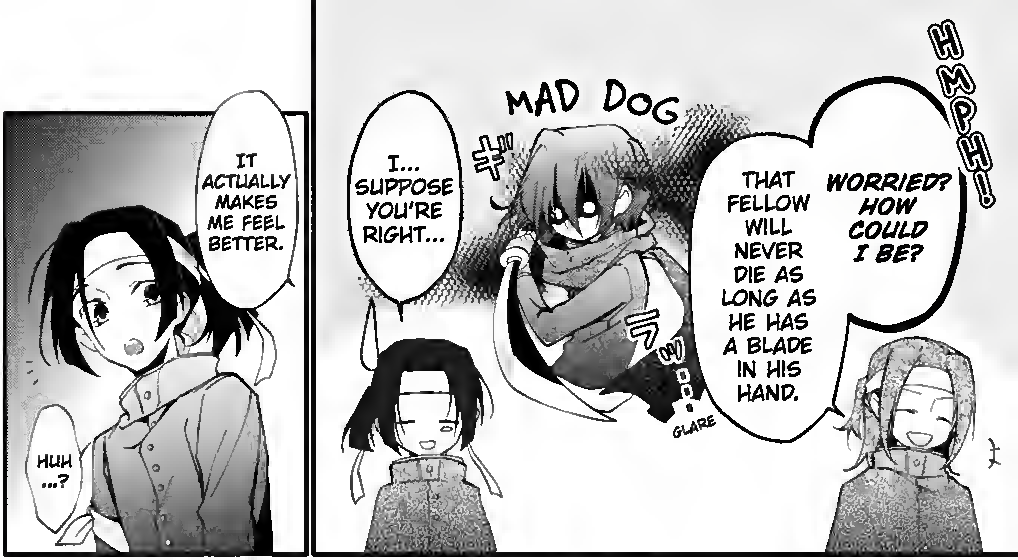

THIS WILL BE THE END OF THE ERA OF THE HOLLY-HOCK...
...AND ITS THREE CENTURIES OF TOKUGAWA GLORY.

FROM NOW ON...
...WE WILL CREATE OUR OWN ERA!
CON-FRONT-ING...
...SHIKYOU AND SAGARA...?
IS THAT HOW I'LL FIND IT?
CLANK
THE REAL REASON THAT I CAME TO THIS ERA...

...HAD BEEN...
...SET IN MOTION BY RYOU-MA'S DEATH.
I HAVE TO GO BACK TO EDO...
AT THAT TIME...
...I WAS SO FO-CUSED ON MOVING FOR-WARD...
...I DIDN'T REAL-IZE...
...JUST HOW MUCH...

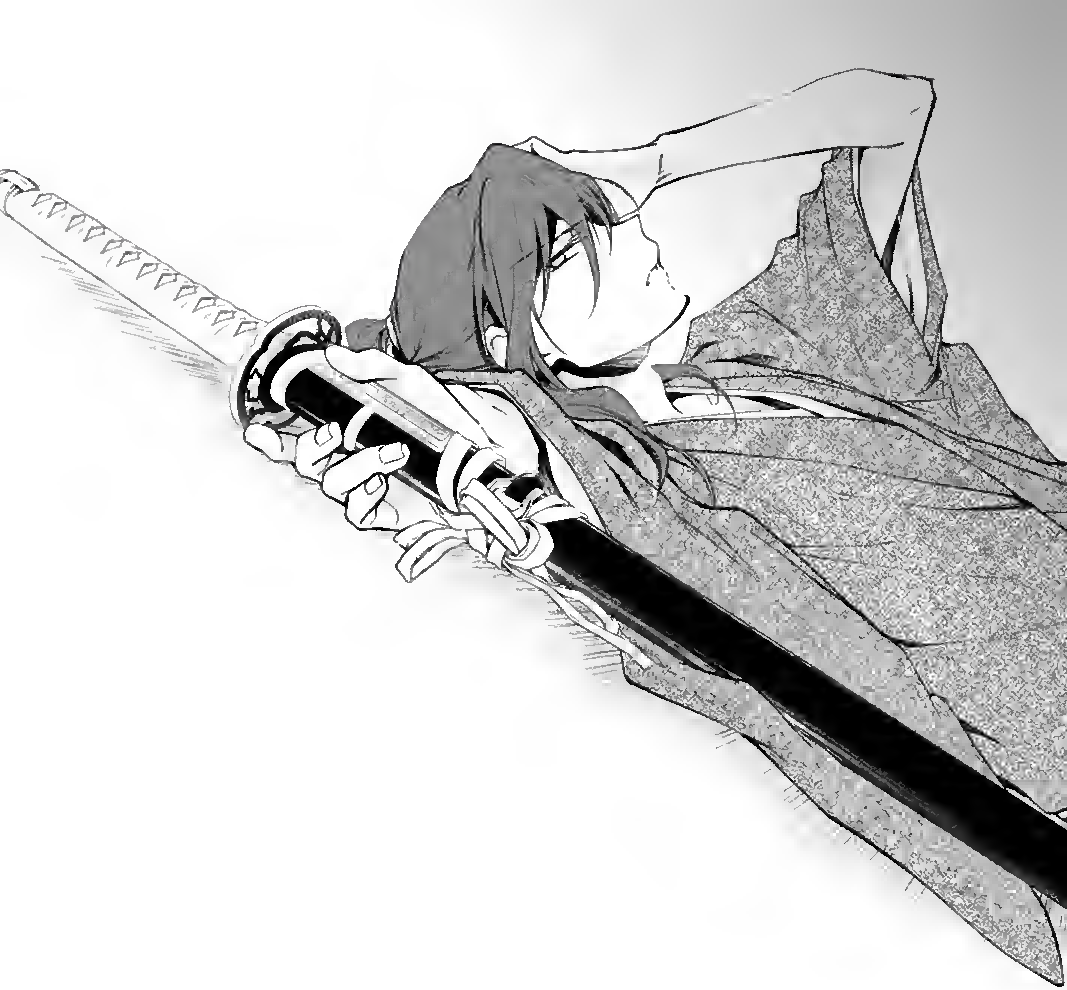
Scarlet
EMPIRE

I WONDER IF SOMETHING HAPPENED...?
CAPTAIN SAGARA AND HIS MEN LEFT THE CAPITAL ON THE SAME DAY, BUT THEY GOT BACK THIS MORNING...
KOTETSU AND THE OTHERS ARE LATE AREN'T THEY...?
YOU'RE SUCH A WORRIER, KOMATSU-KUN.
OF...
...OF COURSE I'M WORRIED!
WHEN I THINK HOW UNSAFE THE CAPITAL IS COMPARED TO EDO...
KIKUCHI SAN...
YOU YOURSELF SAID YOU WERE OFF DUTY TODAY...
YOU'RE STANDING GUARD BECAUSE YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT OOKI-SAN, AREN'T YOU?
.....


HMPH~
WORRIED? HOW COULD I BE?
THAT FELLOW WILL NEVER DIE AS LONG AS HE HAS A BLADE IN HIS HAND.
MAD DOG
GLARE
I... SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT...
IT ACTUALLY MAKES ME FEEL BETTER.
HUH ...?

I'VE KNOWN OOKI SINCE BEFORE WE CAME HERE...
WHEN WE WERE MEMBERS OF THE AKITA CLAN.
LETTING ANYONE ELSE STAND GUARD OVER CAPTAIN SAGARA, EVEN ON THE CAPTAIN'S ORDERS...
THE OOKI I KNEW WOULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING.
IT SEEMS HE'S LEARNED TO TRUST OTHERS A LITTLE.
.....

WHAT ARE YOU SMILING ABOUT?
OH...
YOU REMINDED ME OF A DOTING PARENT PRETENDING TO BE STERN...
IT MADE ME SMILE.
BEAM
ぱぁ～ん
AS IF YOU'RE IN ANY POSITION TO TALK, KOMATSU-KUN.
KIKUCHI... WHAT ARE YOU DOING...?
!
SCUFF
I'B SOWWY. I MEANT IT AD A GOOB WAY..
ARE YOU GETTING SMART WITH ME?
C'MON NOW!!
THAT HURTS...
YOU'RE BACK...!!



Chapter 17:
A Chance Meeting in a Corridor

I MUST THANK YOU...
...FOR YOUR HARD WORK IN THE CAPITAL OF LATE.
FOR ALLOWING LORD OOKUBO TO HARRY ME INTO RETURNING TO EDO...
...AND FOR LEAVING YOU BEHIND TO DEAL WITH ALL THAT FOLLOWED...
...I AM TRULY SORRY.

SHE DID...
...FAR MORE THAN I TO SUPPORT US ALL.
...NAITOU.
YOU DID WELL IN BRINGING EVERYONE SAFELY TO EDO.
N...
NO, SIR...
IT WAS NOTH-ING.
THIS GIRL...
I'M SORRY FOR NOT INTRO-DUCING MY-SELF.
RUSTLE
MY NAME IS YOSHINO.
YOU'RE ...
...THE LASS WE MET IN SHIMABARA, AREN'T YOU?

IT MUST HAVE BEEN A DIFFICULT JOURNEY FOR A YOUNG GIRL.
...I THANK YOU.
RUSTLE
.....
...NOW THEN, KOTE-TSU.
OOKI.

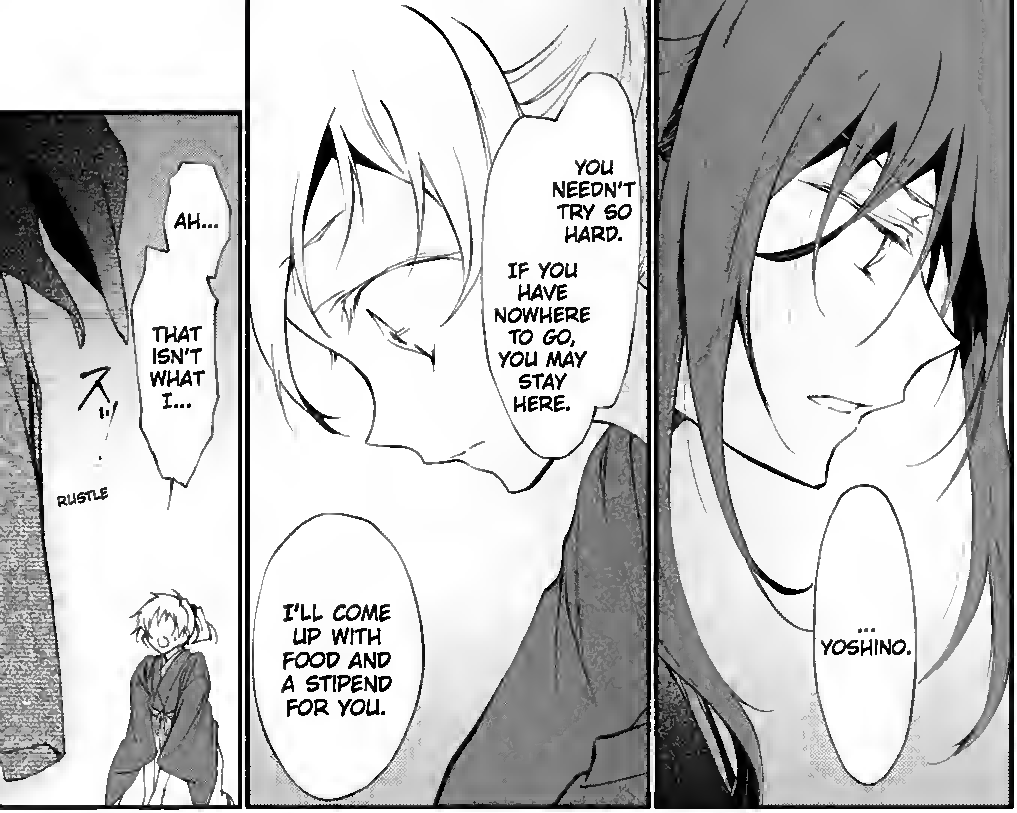
I'M SO...
...SO GLAD YOU'VE RETURNED TO US ALIVE.

I SADDLED YOU BOTH WITH TOO HEAVY A BURDEN.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD FOR YOU TO BEAR...
WE'RE THE ONES WHO SHOULD BE SORRY!
YOU LEFT US IN CHARGE, BUT...
...WE COULDN'T KEEP OUR PROMISE TO YOU, OR KEEP ANYONE SAFE!
WE—
THAT ISN'T TRUE.
THAT TOO WAS ENTIRELY CAUSED BY MY FAILINGS.
HOW CAN I EVER MAKE AMENDS—
WHAT?
N-NO! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SAGARA ...?

I HEARD ...
...ALL ABOUT WHAT TRANSPIRED THAT NIGHT.
THE FAULT...
...IS ALL MINE.

...
CAPTAIN SAGARA!
I KNOW IT ISN'T MY PLACE...
...BUT PLEASE...
I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT HIM!
PLEASE WON'T YOU TELL US ABOUT SHIKYOU KAWASE...!?

I DID NOTHING BUT GET RESCUED...
...WAS SAVED BY SAKAMOTO-HAN AND KOTETSU... AND BY NAKAOKA-HAN... AND EVERYONE ELSE HERE.
MY LIFE...
I WISH TO THINK OF SOMETHING I CAN DO!
THAT'S WHY...
I WISH TO PAY THEM BACK SOMEHOW!
...I'M BEGGING YOU! PLEASE!!


AH...
THAT ISN'T WHAT I...
RUSTLE
I'LL COME UP WITH FOOD AND A STIPEND FOR YOU.
YOU NEEDN'T TRY SO HARD.
IF YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO GO, YOU MAY STAY HERE.
... YOSHINO.

!!
SAGA—
WE'LL SPEAK OF OUR NEXT MOVES IN THE MORNING.
YOU SHOULD ALL BATHE AND GET SOME REST.
THE NIGHT GROWS LATE.

ストン…
SLIDE
ちゃぷん…
THUMP
THAT SAGARA…
HE REALLY IS HIDING SOMETHING ABOUT KAWASE...
NEVER MIND THAT, WHAT ABOUT YOSHINO'S BEHAVIOR...? ESPECIALLY FOR A FIRST MEETING, THAT WAS RUDE OF HER!
MUTTER
BRINGING IT UP WHEN IT'S CLEARLY A SUBJECT HE WOULD RATHER NOT TOUCH ON...
CALM DOWN, OOKI.
YOU LOOK FIT TO KILL.
YOU'RE GOING TO SCRUB YOUR SKIN OFF.
SCRUB

BUT...
...THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN ONLY DISCUSS WITH A PERSON WHO DOESN'T KNOW YOU TOO WELL, RIGHT?
...
I SUPPOSE... THERE ARE, SOMETIMES...
THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE, OF COURSE, BUT...
.....
.....
I'LL GO!!
SPLASH
ALL RIGHT, I'VE GOT IT!
FLINCH

OKAY, BUT LISTEN ...
OOKI, YOU'VE KNOWN SAGARA A LONG TIME, RIGHT?
I'VE GOT A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE, SO IT MIGHT BE EASIER FOR HIM TO TALK TO ME!
YOU HAVE A SENSE OF PERSPEC-TIVE?
COULD I BORROW IT?

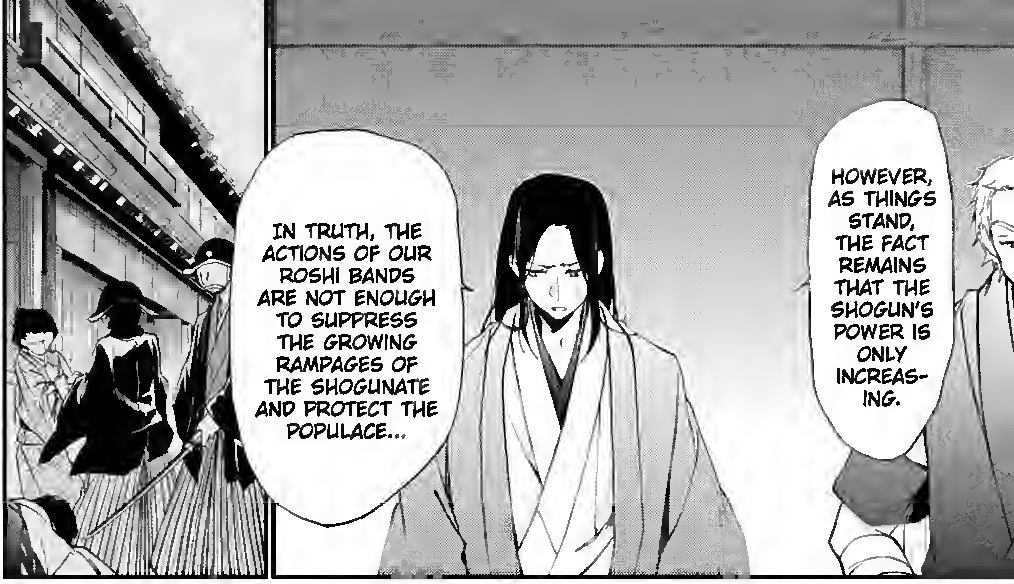
HUH...? YOU?
WHAT'S THE PROB-LEM?
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.

SPLASH
ドボーン
VROOM
SEE YOU GUYS LATER!
ALL RIGHT! IN THAT CASE, THE SOONER THE BETTER!
I HAVE A VERY BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
.....

OH, YOSHI-NO!
KOTE-TSU...
WHAT'S WRONG?
?
...
I'M...
...AFRAID I MAY HAVE GONE TOO FAR.
HEY, IT'S OKAY.
SAGARA WAS A LITTLE SURPRISED, THAT'S ALL.
I'M GOING TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW.

ALL RIGHT...!
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME!
OKAY?
KOTE-TSU...

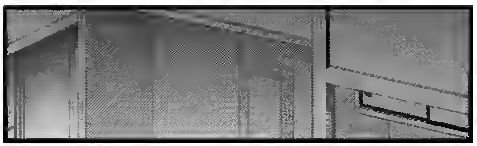
CRACKLE
"SET FIRE TO EDO CASTLE" ...!?
YOU'VE GOTTEN MORE RELIABLE...
IS THAT TRULY ...
...WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN LORD OOKUBO'S MESSAGE ...?
LORD IMUTA? LORD MASU-MITSU?
TH-THEN THEY TRULY INTEND TO MOUNT AN ATTACK ON THE SHOGUN-ATE...
WHICH CAN ONLY MEAN THEY HOPE TO SEND US OVER THE BRINK INTO OUTRIGHT WAR!
LORD SAIGOU WOULD NEVER ALLOW SUCH AN AFFAIR TO—
AFTER LOSING LORD SAKA-MOTO ...
...THE GREATEST PILLAR IN THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE SHOGUNATE AND THE REBEL FACTIONS, COULD NOT LORD SAIGOU HAVE CHANGED HIS MIND AS WELL...?

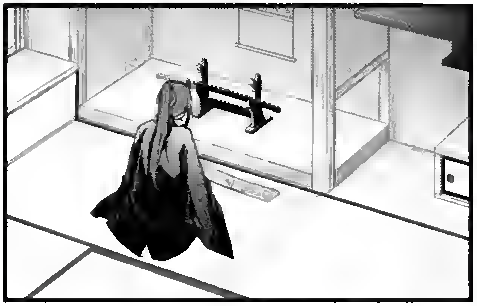

IN TRUTH, THE ACTIONS OF OUR ROSHI BANDS ARE NOT ENOUGH TO SUPPRESS THE GROWING RAMPAGES OF THE SHOGUNATE AND PROTECT THE POPULACE...
HOWEVER, AS THINGS STAND, THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE SHOGUN'S POWER IS ONLY INCREASING.

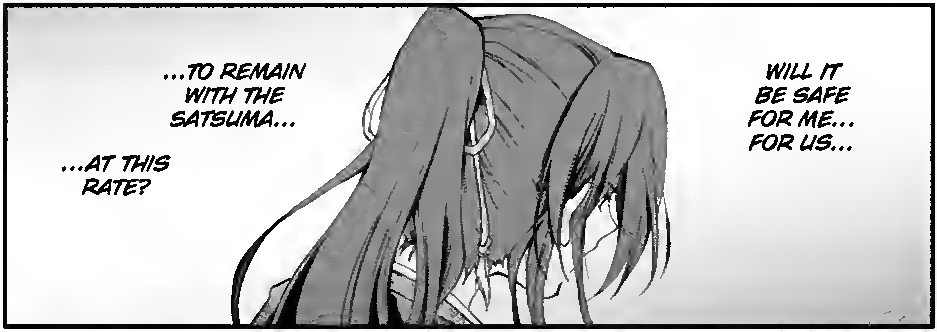
TO CONTROL THE SHOGUNATE, WE MUST FIRST ESTABLISH THE NEW GOVERNMENT...
THAT'S IT.
WE CANNOT START A WAR— NOT NOW.
THERE MUST BE SOME... OTHER WAY WE CAN TAKE WITHOUT RESORTING TO ARSON.

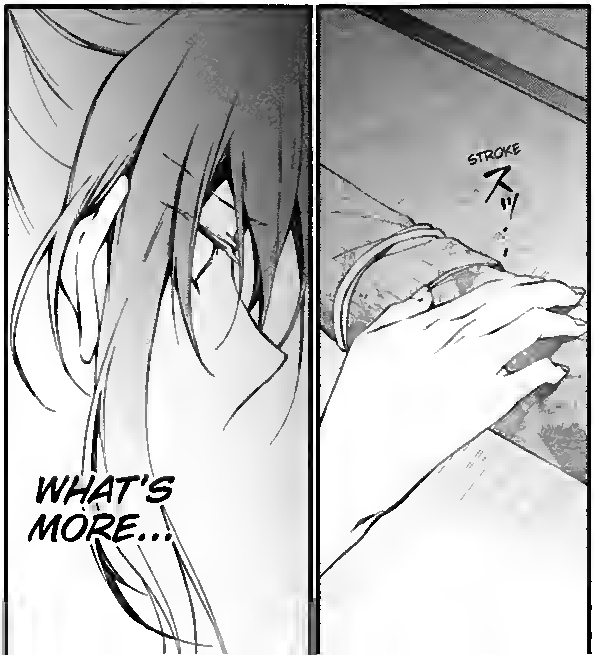
IF WE CAN PROMISE A NEW GOVERNMENT THAT WILL PROTECT THE POWERLESS...
...AND MAKE THE PEOPLE OUR ALLIES...

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
AS TRUE WARRIORS OF THE SATSUMA, OUR POSITION IS DIFFERENT FROM A ROSHI BAND...
...WHO ONLY PROMISED TO HELP THE SATSUMA IN RETURN FOR THE USE OF THEIR MANSION AND THEIR NAME.
WE CANNOT DISOBEY THE ORDERS OF LORD OOKUBO ...
MASUMITSU.
WE'RE NOTHING BUT PAWNS.
BUT IN TRUTH, I AGREE WITH SAGARA-SAN—
WELL, OF COURSE ...
...WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING.
EVEN IF THIS SHIP WE'RE ON IS DOOMED TO SINK...
...IF THE SATSUMA CLAN WILLS IT, ALL WE CAN DO IS SMILE AND KEEP PADDLING.
THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE MEN OF SATSUMA.
I... IMUTA ...





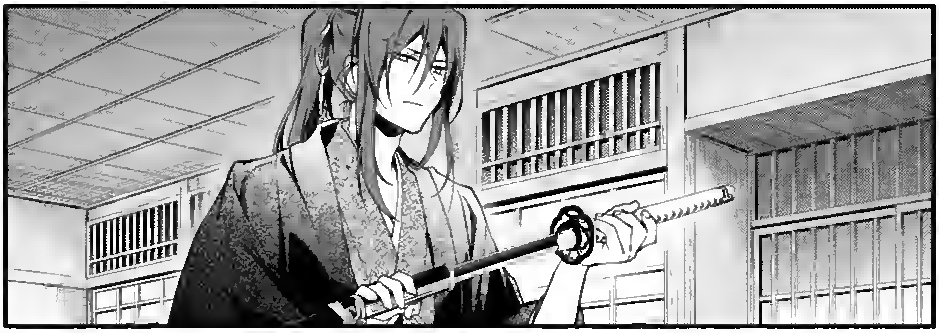




THOUGH WE ALL LOVE OUR COUNTRY AND OPPOSE THE FOREIGNERS, WE HAVE OUR OWN IDEAS ABOUT HOW BEST TO DO SO...

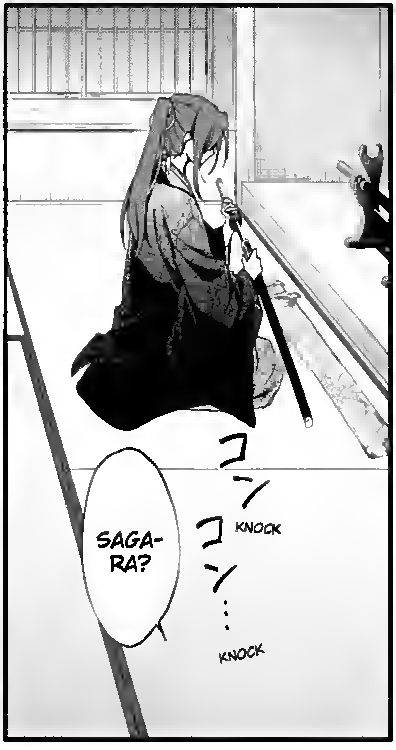
IF OUR IDEALS RUN COUNTER TO EACH OTHER, EVEN IF WE WORK IN CONCERT, NONE OF US WILL BENEFIT.

I CAN NO LONGER...
...CONTINUE TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO OUR OWN TROUBLES...



UMM... ARE YOU IN THERE?
IT'S ME... KOTETSU.
CAN I COME IN?

KO-TETSU, IS IT...?
ENTER.
KCHK


SAGA-RA?
KNOCK
KNOCK

MY SWORD ...?
スー
SLIDE
...SA-GARA.
PLEASE TALK TO ME.
YOU KNOW SOME-THING...
...ABOUT SHIKYOU KAWASE, DON'T YOU...?
BUT I CAN'T DO THAT IF YOU KEEP THIS UP.
TO THINK OF YOUR ENEMY...
...YOU HAVE TO KNOW HIM FIRST.
.....
LOOK, I...
...WANT TO HELP YOU.

RYOU-
MA...
...TOLD
ME THAT.

...SOMEDAY...
...I WOULD HAVE TO SPEAK OF THIS TO YOU.
...I KNEW...
KCHAK
THE SWORDS ...
...I ENTRUSTED TO YOU...
...BELONGED TO A LONGTIME COMRADE-IN-ARMS OF MINE.
THEY WERE ENTRUSTED TO ME...
...WHEN I PARTED COMPANY WITH HIM.

HIS NAME WAS...

...MIYA-SAKA.

Scarlet Empire 3 End

CAST of CHARACTERS

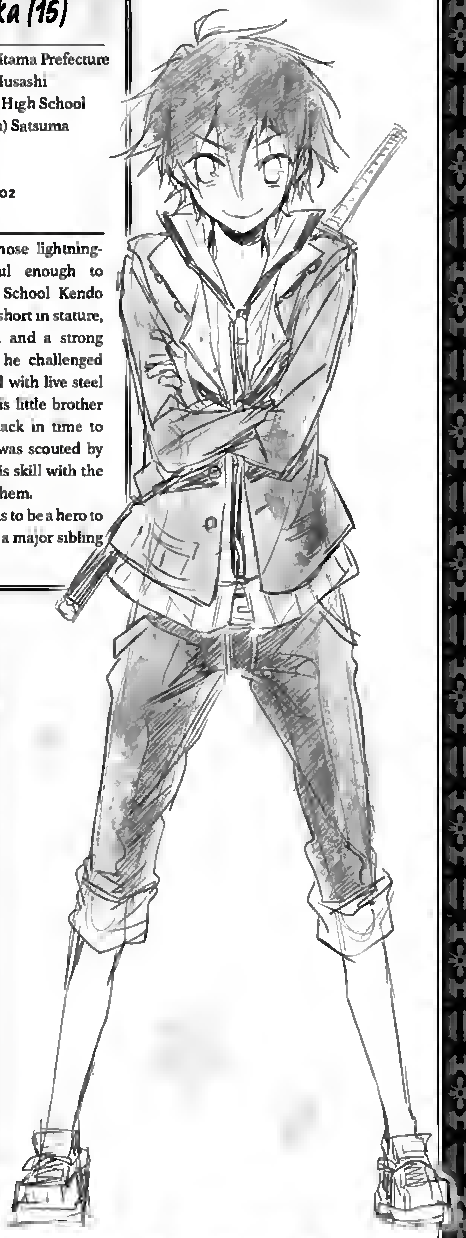
★ = Lunar Age

Scarlet EMPIRE

Kotetsu Miyasaka (15)

[Hometown] Oomiya, Saitama Prefecture
[Affiliation] (Modern) Musashi Ichinomiya High School
(Bakumatsu) Satsuma Roshi Band
[Height] 5' 3"
[Birthdate] March 3, 2002
[Blood Type] A

A genius swordsmen whose lightning-fast degote is powerful enough to win the National High School Kendo Tournament. He may be short in stature, hut he has a hig heart and a strong sense of justice. When he challenged Chihiro Kawase to a duel with live steel after Kawase had hurt his little brother Yayoi, Kotetsu slipped hack in time to the Bakumatsu era. He was scouted by Sagara's roshi band for his skill with the sword and enlisted with them.
<*Notes*> Desperately wants to be a hero to his little brother and has a major sibling complex.



Souzou Sagara (29)★

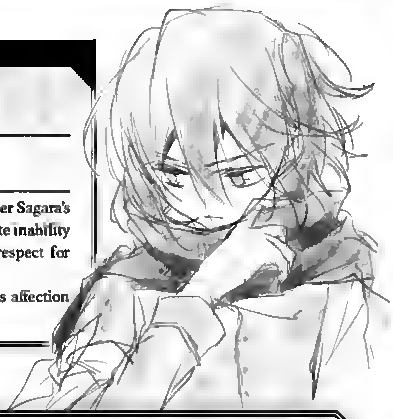
[Hometown] Akasaka, Edo, Musashi Province
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band
[Rank] Captain
[Height] 5' 10"
[Birth Year] 1839

His real name is Shirou Zaemon Masamitsu Kojima. A humble warrior who takes a stand hoping to change the oppressive class system of the shogunate. In the midst of opposing the shogun's tyrannical regime while using the Satsuma mansion as his base, he finds himself destined for a chance encounter with Rotetsu. A dauntless fellow accomplished in the literary and military arts and known for his magnetic personality, though sometimes given to flights of fancy that hewilder those around him.
<*Notes*> Has a hablt of giving lavish gifts to those he likes, perhaps due m being raised in a well-to-do family.

Yayoi Miyasaka (15)

[Hometown] Oomiya, Saitama Prefecture
[Birthdate] March 3, 2002
[Affiliation] Kaisei Academy
[Blood Type] AB
[Height] 5' 8"

The younger twin brother of Kotetsu Miyasaka. Aims to excel at kendo along with his older brother. A hard worker who practices daily. Enrolled at Kaisei Academy, a school with a prestigious kendo program, but was used like a mere tool by the club president and ace, Chihiro, which plunged him into despair and damaged his relationship with Kotetsu
<*Notes*> As Kotetsu's younger brother, he's the perfect foil for his older twin's laid-back behavior.



Shirou Ooki (19)★

[Hometown] Dewa Province
[Birth Year] 1849
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band
[Rank] Inspector

A brilliant swordsman and former warrior of the Akita clan. Joined the roshi band after Sagara's character and ideals won his heart. Ordinarily a very quiet sort, but has an unfortunate inability to control his emotions in response to disgraceful behavior and those with no respect for propriety (especially Kotetsu).
<*Notes*> Exists in a state of perpetual annoyance with Kotetsu, but often shows his affection for Sagara.

Chihiro Kawase (17)

[Hometown] ?
[Birthdate] June 17, 2000
[Affiliation] Kaisei Academy
[Blood Type] A
[Height] 5' 9"

The president of the Kaisei Academy Kendo Club and the charismatic prince of the high school kendo world. Although skilled at sashimen, he lost to Kotetsu in the final match of the national tournament. Powerfully obsessed with victory to an abnormal degree and willing to resort to unsportsmanlike tactics
<*Notes*> Fond of the saying "History is written by the victors."

Shikyou Kawase (?)

[Hometown] ?
[Birth Year] ?
[Affiliation] ?
[Rank] ?

A master swordsman who has alternately been a killer for the shogunate and a stooge for Ookubo's machinations. The primary culprit in the murder of Ryouma Sakamoto. The reasons for his relentless pursuit of Sagara remain unclear Everything about him is shrouded in mystery, except for his resemblance to Chihiro Kawase.
<*Notes*> Has a number of tricks up his sleeves (including smoke bombs and lariat cords)

Souji Shibuya (22)★

[Hometown] Shimousa Province [Rank] Messenger
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band

The heart and soul of the roshi band. A big eater and compulsive snacker who hardly talks about anything but food. Seems irresponsible at a glance, but performs his duties flawlessly Spends a lot of his time with Nishimura.
<*Notes*> Loves dumplings made with sticky pounded rice, possibly due to being born into a farming family.

Kingo Nishimura (25)★

[Hometown] Ise Province [Rank] Inspector & Messenger
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band

A former warrior of the Kameyama clan. After cutting ties with his liege lord, he was involved with the Tengu faction (the instigators of the Mito Rebellion and the Sakuradamon Incident) before enlisting in the Satsuma roshi band. Ordinarily a soft-spoken sort, but his steadfast attitude toward his duties is highly valued by Sagara.
<*Notes*> Nobody gets away with playing off Souji's eccentricities except his beloved Nishi-yan.

Genichirou Kaneda (?)

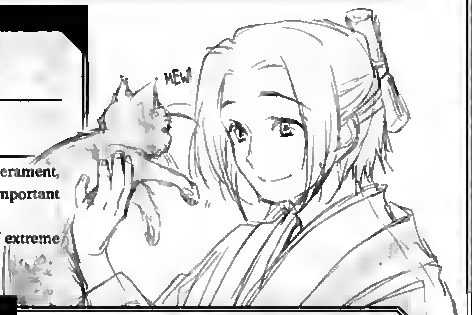
[Hometown] Suruga Province [Rank] Messenger
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band

A hero within the roshi band. There's not an ounce of excess on his body or in his conversation, but upon close inspection, he has a fairly laid-back personality. At heart, he's a man's man and therefore something of a loner.
<*Notes*> Thanks to his brutal daily exercise regime, he has the best muscles in the entire roshi band.

Naitou (?)

[Hometown] ? [Rank] Soldier
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band

Stands out even among a band full of unique types for his mild temperament, soothing nature, and gentle heart. Steadfastly carries out mundane yet important duties, such as going ahead on journeys as the yadowari.
<*Notes*> Has a natural way with animals, possibly because of his aura of extreme kindness.



Jirou Mizuhara (41)★

[Hometown] Musashi Province [Rank] Vice-Captain
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band

A scholar of ancient literature and Japanese culture who enlisted in the roshi band at the request of Souzou Sagara. Has a solemn and somewhat chilly personality Supports Sagara and the others from the shadows with his cool and accurate ability to assess any situation.
<*Notes*> Being an attractive older man, his very presence improves the caliber of whatever room he's in.

Kikuchi (23)★

[Hometown] Dewa Province
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band
[Rank] Inspector

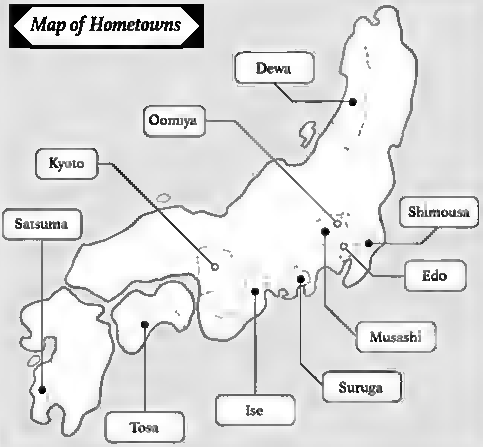
A former warrior of the Akita clan, just like Ooki. A nice guy who surreptitiously keeps an eye on Ooki.

Saburou Komatsu (?)

[Hometown] Tosa Province
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band
[Rank] Inspector & Messenger

A former warrior of the Tosa clan. Mainly employed carrying messages for the roshi band. A worry wart.

Map of Hometowns



Kikunosuke Asai (?)

[Hometown] ?
[Affiliation] Satsuma Roshi Band

A wretched man who tried and failed to ensnare the roshi band. Incurred Shikyou's wrath and got himself killed.

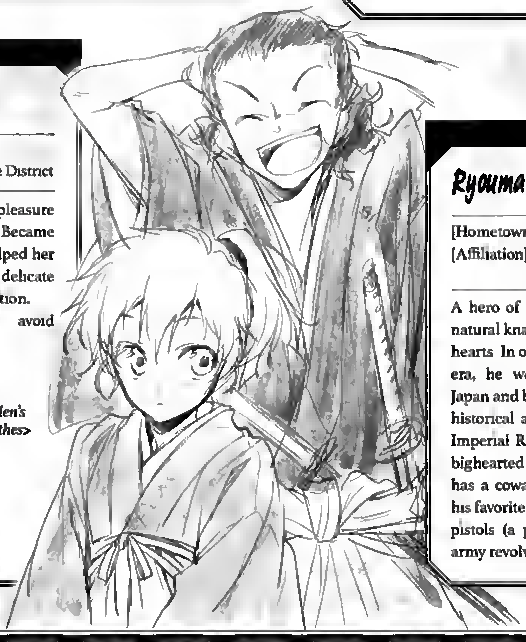
Yoshino (16)★

[Hometown] Kyoto
[Affiliation] Shimabara Pleasure District

Made her escape from the pleasure district to see the outside world. Became very fond of Ryouma after he helped her during her escape. Although a delicate girl, she has a big sisterly disposition. (Donned men's clothing to avoid discovery during her escape!)

<Women's Clothes>

<Men's Clothes>



Ryouma Sakamoto (32)★

[Hometown] Tosa Province
[Affiliation] Kaientai

A hero of the Bakumatsu with a natural knack for stealing people's hearts. In order to establish a new era, he went traveling all over Japan and brought about the great historical accomplishment of the Imperial Restoration. Despite his bighearted personality, he also has a cowardly side. These days, his favorite weapons are his prized pistols (a pair of S&W Model 2 army revolvers)

Toshimichi Ookubo (38)★

[Hometown] Satsuma Province

Like Saigou, another high-ranking Satsuma noble seeking to overthrow the shogunate. Favors ousting the shogunate by military force and is willing to use ruthless methods to achieve his goals.

Takamori Saigou (40)★

[Hometown] Satsuma Province

The head of the Satsuma clan and one of the central figures of the Bakumatsu in fact as well as in name. Lends the Satsuma mansion in Edo to Sagara and his roshi band.

Tomomi Iwakura (43)★

[Hometown] Kyoto

A high-ranking nobleman with monstrously high ambitions who plans to change Japan as a politician. Plotting to hoist the brocade banner and overthrow the shogunate by force.

Kyuunosuke Masumitsu (27)★

[Hometown] Satsuma Province

A Satsuma warrior under orders from Saigou to take on the same mission as Imuta. Adept at gathering intelligence.

Shouhei Imuta (36)★

[Hometown] Satsuma Province

A Satsuma warrior who uses the Satsuma mansion in Edo as his base along with the roshi band. Possessed of strong, unwavering devotion to the Satsuma clan.

Souji Okita (24)★

The finest master of the sword in the Shinsengumi. Usually snappish and irritable due to his awareness of his own death drawing near.

Hajime Saitou (24)★

A brilliant swordsman, one of the best in the Shinsengumi. Given to voicing bitter sarcasm ever since Okita fell ill

Toshizou Hijikata (33)★

Vice-Captain of the Shinsengumi, who cracks down on anti shogunate forces in the capital. A mad dog who will chase his prey to the very ends of the earth.

AFTERWORD

Thank you very much!!

ありがとうございました!!

Tsuda

2014. 8. 27

Thanks for waiting! This is the third volume.
I got a lot of help at the Sagara festival this spring and was able to interview the descendants of Sagara and Shibuya. I also managed to speak with Sagara the Fifth himself.
It seems like being kind and mild-mannered runs in the blood of the men of the Sagara family...<3 It made me want to write my very best!

I have one thing I want to confess here. We revealed Ketetsu's height as 5'3", but he was originally set as being 5'5" cm tall...
He shrank two inches because of my right hand. It happened because I misremembered him as being 5'3" and drew him that way. I'm so sorry, Ketetsu... I'm sure you'll grow taller next year.
Thanks so much for reading!

Tanaka

2014. 08. 27

I'm on Twitter keep track of updates...

twitter @c1Bwa3

Thank you for reading Volume 3. It's been a while since the last volume, and this one ended up being really long. Even I was surprised.
I got a different assistant background artist at the beginning of the year and a different assistant toner in April. Overall, a lot of people supported me as I finished this volume.
When I was a student, I didn't do very well in history class and mostly escaped into my geography elective instead. While drawing this historical drama, I've learned a lot. I often catch myself thinking, "Man, I wish I'd studied harder!" But since this is all stuff I didn't know about, I think I've been able to create something that will reach even those who are reading a historical drama for the first time. I hope I'll be able to remember that spirit even while I'm drawing whatever I work on next (But first I should work on my Japanese...)

Special thanks.

Toshikaru-sama

Everyone in the Hagaya-gumi

-STAFF-

bison-sama

Kaneda-sama

Shirase-sama

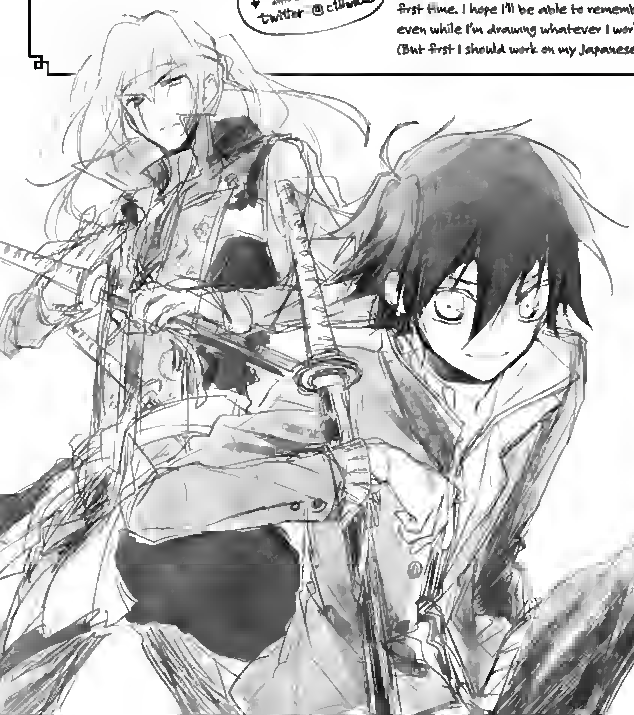
Toyokura Akino-sama

Akitsuki Naho-sama

Igoyagoshishi-sama

Our manager, S-sama

and you!



Volume 4 of Scarlet Empire goes on sale in March 2016! Look forward to it!!

We love getting mail with your thoughts and reactions!

Address letters to:
Henjirou Teukicke or Hikaru Tanaka
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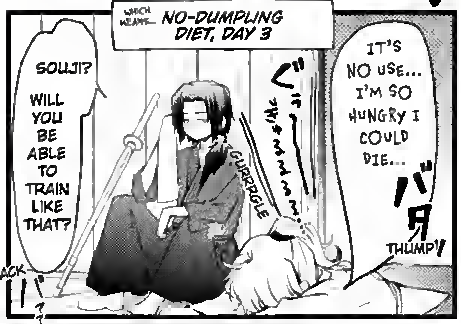
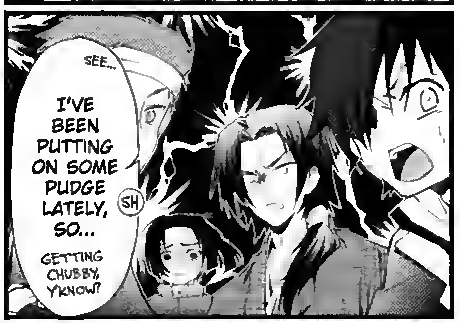
I'LL BET YOU WERE EXPECTING KAWASE-SAMA, RIGHT!?
GLONK
ゴン
Chiyo's EMPIRE
IT'S ME!
*APPEARED IN CHAPTERS 4 ~ 6
KIKUNOSUKE ASAI

Food Wasn't Quit In a Day


WHICH MEANS... NO-DUMPLING DIET, DAY 3
SOUJI? WILL YOU BE ABLE TO TRAIN LIKE THAT?
IT'S NO USE... I'M SO HUNGRY I COULD DIE...
GURRRGLE
CRACK
THUMP!

RRAH!
NOBODY HAS BEEN EATING ANY DUM—
CRACK
IF YOU WON'T HIDE YOUR SHAME, AT LEAST HIDE THE STICKS...
ANYWAY, WHAT'S WITH YOU GUYS... EATING SUCH GIANT SKEWERS OF DUMPLINGS WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING...
YOU'RE HORRIBLE!

All Roads Lead to Food



...LOOK, CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOME-THING BESIDES FOOD?
I TOLD YOU, I'M FINE...
THEY SAY YOU SHOULD EAT EEL WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL WELL...
U-UM...
IT MIGHT SNOW TONIGHT, SOU...
YOU SHOULD EAT SOME SOOTHING GRUEL AND GO TO BED EARLY TONIGHT.
TMP TMP
WHAT HAP-PENED? DID YOU EAT SOME-THING WEIRD!?

GLOSSARY

COMMON HONORIFICS

no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.

-san: The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.

-sama: Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.

-kun: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.

-chan: An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used roostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.

-sensei: A respectful term for teachers, artists, or high-level professionals.

-niisan, nii-san: A term of endearment meaning "big brother" that may be more widely used to address any young man who is like a brother, regardless of whether he is related or not.

Bakumatsu: The final years of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1853–1868).

Edo period: The period between 1603 and 1868, when Japan was under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Also known as the Tokugawa period.

Kaientai: Literally, the "Maritime Support Group." A private navy and shipping company founded by Ryouma Sakamoto in 1865.

Kamo River: A famous river that runs through Kyoto, celebrated in literature and song.

Lunar age: According to the Chinese lunar calendar, newborns were considered one year old at birth and aged another year at every New Year's Day.

Mimawarigumi: A special police force formed in Kyoto to guard the Imperial Palace. Composed of high-ranked samurai and noblemen, unlike the lower-class Shinsengumi.

Nakasendo: One of the five great highways of Japan during the Edo period. Less traveled than the Tokaido, it curved inland across the mountains from Tokyo to Kyoto.

Roshi: A samurai without a liege lord. Considered socially inferior. (Also known as a "*ronin*.")

Seppuku: Literally, "stomach slitting." A form of ritual suicide, requiring one to open one's own belly with a blade.

Shimabara: A famous pleasure district inhabited by entertainers and captive courtesans.

Shinsengumi: A special police force formed in Kyoto to protect the shogunate during the upheaval of the Bakuroatsu. Famous for their blue uniforms.

Tokaido: The most famous of the five great highways of Japan during the Edo period. Highly traveled in its heyday, it stretched from Tokyo to Kyoto.

Yadowari: Someone who goes ahead of a traveling party to arrange for lodgings.

SCARLET EMPIRE 3

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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